

A CREED OF LIFE

As Realized Through Selected
Book Reviews

Allan M. Savage

Copyright © 2021 Allan M Savage

All rights reserved.

D. I. M. Publishing

Website: <https://site-1727391-1843-9198.mystrikingly.com>

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introductory Note	1
Reviews in Light of a Creed of Life	3
<i>Beyond the Sea: Navigating Bioshock</i> , Felan Parker & Jessica Aldred	
<i>Posthumanism: A Guide for the Perplexed</i> , Peter Mahon	
<i>Philosophy Through Video Games</i> , Jon Cogburn & Mark Silcox	
<i>I am not a Brain: Philosophy of Mind for the Twenty-first Century</i> , Markus Gabriel	
<i>Doing Philosophy: From Common Curiosity to Logical Reasoning</i> Timothy Williamson	
<i>Technology and the Virtues: A Philosophical Guide to a Future Worth Wanting</i> Shannon Vallor	
<i>Journeys: The Impact of Personal Experience on Religious Thought</i> Gregory Baum	
<i>Hume's Challenge and the Renewal of Modern Philosophy</i> Leslie Dewart	

Leslie Dewart (1922-2009) Canada's Forgotten Theological
Philosopher: A Review of His Major Works

Critical Thinkers on the Threshold of Posthuman
Philosophy: William Gladstone & George Tyrrell

Reflections on Ecological Philosophy in Light of
Dehellenized Western Theism

Posthuman Theological Reflections

Beyond the Breakwater: Venturing into Posthuman
Philosophical Waters

Faith and Queer Consciousness: Philosophical Thinking in a
New Key

Philosophy is a Destabilizing Inquiry

The 'Avant-Garde' Theology of George Tyrrell: Its
Philosophical Roots Changed My Theological Thinking

Dehellenization and Dr Dewart Revisited: A First-Person
Philosophical Reflection

A Future for Disbelief? Philosophy in a Dehellenized Age
with Implications for Theology

Alfred Adler and the Theological Virtues (M.Th. Thesis,
1989)

Ecclesial Reflections: Three Contemporary Essays

Philosophical Musings: Or, Philosophical Research into
Western Thinking

BASINGER, David, & Randall Basinger – *Philosophy and Miracle: The Contemporary Debate*

BROOKS, David – *The Road to Character*

BUERMEYER, Laurence – *The Aesthetic Experience*

BUBER, Martin – *Between Man and Man*

CALEY, David – *The Rivers North of the Future*

CHITTISTER, Joan – *The Monastery of the Heart: An Invitation to a Meaningful Life*

CHITTISTER, Joan & Archbishop Rowan WILLIAMS – *Uncommon Gratitude: Alleluia for All That Is*

CORNWELL, John – *Breaking Faith*

DAVIS, [Henderson] Claire – *After the Church: Divine Encounter in a Sexual Age*

De SATGE, John – *Peter and the Single Church*

DEWART, Leslie – *Religion, Language, and Truth*

DEWART, Leslie – *The Foundations of Belief*

DEWART, Leslie – *Future of Belief: Theism in a World Come of Age*

DEWART, Leslie – *Evolution and Consciousness: The Role of Speech in the Origin and Development of Human Nature*

DWYER, Jean Marie – *The Sacred Place of Prayer: The Human Person Created in God's Image*

GARDNER, Martin – *The Whys of a Philosophical Scrivener*

GEORGIU, S. T. – *The Isle of Monte Cristo*

GRIFFITH, Brian – *Correcting Jesus: 2000 Years of Changing the Story*

HERBERT, David – *Religion and Civil Society: Rethinking Public Religion in the Contemporary World*

KWANT, Remy – *Critique: Its Nature and Function*

KWANT, Remy – *Phenomenology of Language*

LEONARD, Ellen – *George Tyrrell and the Catholic Tradition*

LEVI, Peter – *The Frontiers of Paradise: A Study of Monks and Monasteries*

McLAUGHLIN, Anne Kathleen – *A Place Called Morning*

MURRAY, Gilbert – *Stoic, Christian and Humanist*

NEWELL, Philip – *Praying with the Earth: A Prayerbook for Peace*

NOLAN, Albert – *Jesus Before Christianity*

O'MURCHU, Diarmuid – *Religion in Exile: A Spiritual Homecoming*

PUNGENTE, John & Monty WILLIAMS – *Finding God in the Dark II*

ROPS, Daniel & SPRUG, Joseph – *Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Catholicism (1959-1964)*

SABATIER, Auguste – *The Vitality of Christian Dogmas and Their Power of Evolution*

SABATIER, Auguste – *Religions of Authority and the Religion of the Spirit*

SABATIER, Auguste – *Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion Based on Psychology and History*

SKRBINA, David – *Panpsychism in the West*

THERON, Daniel J. – *The Apostle Paul: His Gospel Before the Gospels*

THORNTON, Martin – *My God: Reappraisal of Normal Religious Experience*

THORNTON, Martin – *Christian Proficiency*

THORNTON, Martin – *English Spirituality: An Outline of Ascetical Theology According to the English Pastoral Tradition*

TRUDINGER, Paul – *Leaves from the Note Book of an Unashamed Heretic*

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

This book is a compendium of book reviews reflecting the author's "Creed of Life." The fact is that my Creed of Life has been fashioned through these authors, as well as others not mentioned here, whose works were personally important to me and significant to my intellectual development. This list is continually being lengthened as authors, living or dead and previously unknown to me, are added. Only authors profoundly influencing my Creed of Life are mentioned here. Other authors, whose works were interesting, but not highly influential, were rejected for purposes of this account. My rejection of them, however, is no judgment on their significance in the formation of a Creed of Life by other individuals. The authors I have selected were significant in my work as a theologian whose task is to interpret doctrine and religious belief to the faithful. The point of departure for an exposé of my Creed of Life is the interpretive shift that occurred in the doctrinal and pastoral documents issued by the Second Vatican Council. To my way of thinking, hidden in the doctrinal and pastoral philosophical interpretations by the Council's theologians and philosophers are significant resources for philosophical and theological reflection on the fashioning of a personal Creed of Life. It has been my experience, arising from conciliar doctrinal and pastoral interpretation, that a contemporary approach towards self-knowledge as well as an entry into and a deeper appreciation of

contemporary wisdom may be established. The reader will appreciate that these reviews may be identified with the various moments of my intellectual discontinuity with the past when I, in effect, “stopped believing that, and began believing this.” The books reviewed here, written by others, and the books that I have written reflect these moments.

I judge it useful to begin Chapter One with eight somewhat recent book reviews on various contemporary, but related, topics. Chapter Two consists of a selection of the books that I have written which remain significant indicators of my Creed of Life. Chapter Three is a historical review, as it were, of earlier reviews that I publicly posted as my Creed of Life was in the process of development, although I was not aware of its development at the time. These pages are written with the benefit of hindsight and I have slightly edited the original reviews accordingly by adding to, or subtracting from, the published reviews.

Finally, the reader will do well to remember that a Creed of Life is a subjective philosophical attitude *to* life; not a set of objective ideological propositions *about* life.

REVIEWS IN LIGHT OF A CREED OF LIFE

A Creed of Life is a dynamic process. It is not fixed, but ever changing. The reviews below were written with that understanding in mind at the time, and must be read with that understanding. In other words, I might write a different review today compared to the one I wrote originally.



Beyond the Sea: Navigating Bioshock, Felan Parker & Jessica Aldred (2018, McGill-Queen's University Press)

Some readers might wonder why this book classified as *cultural studies*, and specifically as *game studies*, would interest a theological philosopher, for that is what I now consider myself to be. The answer is that I believe that there is an unacknowledged philosophical perspective behind the gaming experience that needs to be brought to the surface in contemporary cultural studies.

Judging by the book's index and the copious notes and references these essays are clearly intended for academics who are actively engaged in gaming or have been in the past. The ample detail in some of the essays about the plot, purpose and criticism of Bioshock will appeal to those who know the series well. But I am a philosopher, not a gamer. While philosophizing about gaming, I wondered about how the various aspects of posthuman humanity have made themselves explicit in gaming and, if these aspects of posthuman humanity concealed any philosophical unity behind their appearance. (In general, philosophical activity in contrast to the gaming experience, has purposes that are non-manipulative, and as such does not directly change the experienced world of the gamer.) I suggest that the reader keep in mind this "Player's Creed" while assessing this review.

I make the gaming world. There is no overall system which determines what I make.

I choose what kind of world I want to make. My actions show what things I regard as valuable.

I create value and do not participate in value already given.

I make what order there is. I am not made by it. I am independent, not bound by any dependence more powerful than myself.

I am free because what happens in the world depends on me; not a providence beyond my control.

My fate is in my hands. I, and only I, create history. *

*Adapted: Cf. Grant, George P. (1966:40) *Philosophy in the Mass Age*, Copp Clarke Publishing.

I do not look back upon the gaming life in my retirement years as

others may be inclined to do as “anything other than exaggerated nostalgia or bemused dismissal” (Keogh).¹ Although lacking any gaming experience, I read this collection of essays being conscious that a philosophical inquiry into the games and their construction might yield some significant direction that has been developed via Western technology for the continuing formation of my Creed of Life which continues to evolve. I put emphasis on the subjectivity, not the objectivity, of game interpretation as games have developed in new directions. I concentrate on those issues that impinge on the understanding of the human player engaging with the game. (Other reviewers will no doubt make other choices.) There are, to my mind, philosophical presumptions in the development of video games which are rooted in Hellenic philosophy, and I question the appropriateness of Hellenic philosophy for the interpretation of the posthuman player’s experience. Gamers, I contend, are in fact engaging in a posthuman reality since the interactive capacity of computers with humans is an ingredient absent in the non-digital human experience. Programming catering to an earlier consumer logic, has come of age and is “self-evidently worthy of study to those outside the field,” (Parker & Aldred). Their comment justifies my interest in gaming and provides me with an opportunity for a critical review from the perspective of my present Creed of Life – particularly with respect to what it means to be human. More than

¹ Bracketed references are to authors who have made contributions within this collection of essays.

the games' status in a hyper-capitalist industry, the conception of the human player by the games' designers invites philosophical discussion in light of the formation of a Creed of Life. As Parker and Aldred state: "Issues of power, identity, and representation relating to gender, race, secularity and class run through the book, and this by editorial design."

Part One: Unity and Metamorphosis: Making and Braking Family Bonds in Bioshock.

The philosophy of Ayn Rand, identified as *Objectivist Philosophy*, is introduced into this collection of essays by describing "a capitalist society free of religious and government interference, where any citizen could achieve for their own gain, rather than for the altruistic fulfillment of the wants of others" (Strang). This resembles Marx's understanding of the proletariat as described by Grant. "The proletariat consists of those who have no creative responsibility for the society through their work, because they do not own the means of production with which they have to work. They are employees serving the private interests of their employers"² Such an objectivist philosophy is rooted in Hellenic ideals that have been modernized and often without their limitations for the current context being recognized. Many theories that constitute an understanding the human being, including feminist psychoanalysis, continue this objectivist approach and may present a "deployment of a specific

² Grant, George (1966:63) *Philosophy in the Mass Age*, Copp Clarke.

analytical instrument across a body of video games that reveal a cultural problematic unfolding across media” at large (Vanderhoef & Payne). Because of this objectivist philosophy the theme of *co-creation*, which is of paramount importance in my Creed of Life, is inadequately developed in posthuman gaming which continues to rely on a classical understanding of the person. In classical philosophy humans can be nothing but “creatures” of a transcendent creator-God who is characteristic of the Judaic, Islamic and Christian tradition. There is much food for thought in preparing for the posthuman future of gaming as it tries to solve the tension that now exists “between wanting to constrain and protect the game experience for the player, versus opening up the experience to co-creation with the player” (Schrier). Co-creation in game programming cannot but result in novel interpretation.

Part Two: To Seduce the Ear and Delight the Spirit: Bioshock, Gender, and Sexuality.

The opening essay in Part Two in this collection has attempted a “queer” interpretation of game programming, where “queer” is in opposition to heteronormativity in sexual matters and does not necessarily refer to a particular gender or sexuality. Although some research into heteronormativity is occurring, “a reconsideration of the familiar is just what queer theory, particularly as applied to game studies, needs right now” (Mejeur). Game programming requires a philosophy that enlightens programmers who struggle in

constructing games based on current social conventions in order to hold the illusion of gaming together. Lacking such a philosophy of adhesive creativity, “Bioshock proves itself unable to fully rupture the frames of both gametime and reproduction, leaving us bound once again to a repeatable, recognizable future” (Youngblood). Following the mind of the religious philosopher Leslie Dewart, I suggest that a recognizable future of gaming activity is to be expected because the classical philosophy that underpins game programming remains operative. What goes unrecognized here is the static ideology of Hellenic (Platonic) philosophy that limits the options of authentic co-creativity in the gaming experience. These hidden Hellenic philosophical roots are forces that facilitate “the repeated inability of games to imagine plots outside the existing structures that have governed game design for years” (Youngblood). A critical philosophical interpretation may allow for radically and distinctively new endings for gaming’s posthuman experience. The highly relevant topic of violence as part of gaming is critiqued in one essay in this collection via “a subjectivity,” that is, as another way of identifying the gamer. From the point of view of the player and the programmer, violence manifests “the paranoia of political structures, the constant need to control all resources, to stop rebellions, to prompt fear about violence while mobilizing sanctioned institutions of violence” (Ante-Contreras). Given that the gaming experience will most likely continue to be influential in forming the gamer’s Creed of Life, it needs an adequate philosophy

of interpretation of the means to assess correctly in the posthuman age the violence done to healthy humans by paranoid humans.

Part Three: The Flesh Becomes Clay: Technology, Humanity, and Embodiment in Bioshock.

Posthuman philosophy “takes the position that actions of both human and nonhuman entities affect situation outcomes, often in ways one might not expect,” (Henthorn). A concern for posthuman interpretation of the games’ outcomes, as I see it, is that classical humanism has not been adequately understood or explained from a phenomenological point of view so as to act satisfactorily as a foundation for posthuman understanding in the determination of one’s Creed of Life. That is, there is little in contemporary philosophy to definitely specify (or to achieve consensus) in what it means to be a human being, from which posthuman thought may draw, outside the foundational thought of ancient Greek philosophy. This leads Henthorn to observe that some “posthuman analysis does not accept the border between human and machine, and instead critiques the structures that maintain humanity in the face of a progressively posthuman world.” I wonder what concept of humanity is being maintained, then, by some contemporary philosophers – one that is classical or one that is primitive? The philosophical ideas expressed in current gaming programming lead me to affirm that many gaming programmers continue to create architectural backdrops that extend “ideas pursued by a particular

scientific paradigm effective during the first half of the twentieth century” (Schott). Thus, it follows that an alternative philosophical understanding has the potential to take game programming into new paradigms of postmodern experience — including what it means to be human without technological intervention, but merely in a context that is no longer classical, but techno-digital. However, it may be safely said that currently the status of humanity is in a quandary as it transitions from an enlightenment humanism to posthumanism. “The human in relation to Bioshock 2 is a decaying, undead thing that continues to act on the world despite it being no more important or powerful than anything else it is relating to” (Kunzelman). But this decaying, undead thing is a product of science fiction need not remain the standard. A new conception of humanity, without technological addition, but rather interpreted through a dehellenized philosophy may afford a more positive set of optional endings to gaming activity and the formation of a Creed of Life. Naturally, a dehellenized interpretation requires the philosophy of *to be*, to be re-examined by philosophers in light of the non-western philosophies of the human experience.

Part Four: There’s Always a City: The Many Histories of Bioshock.

The gaming design predominately incorporates the American political experience. “These failed utopias [Rapture and Columbia] were created during periods of social and political transition in America” (Zaidan). They are an historical interpretation which

accounts for “how we got here,” through exploring player biases, not simply rehearsing a chronology of events. A challenge for the future presented by the essays in this collection might be how to explain an authentic human presence in a posthuman world that has been altered by technology. What might result, then, is a game catering less to science fiction and more to philosophy and afford more of a “globalized” experience open to the player, since philosophical thinking is a habit natural to the human, not requiring a Western intellectual framework (i.e., the American political experience). This is not an impossibility since the game experience, “holds the potential to incite player reflection upon their role as citizens and about their own agency and choices of the doomed yet timeless worlds of Rapture and Columbia” (Zaidan). Game design need not confine itself to the inspiration that arises from Western technological philosophical interpretation. Rather, there is potential for a game programming theme to be presented as floating “in a quantum state, in which its definition remains simultaneously unclear and has the seeds of its failure as well as the seeds of its success inbuilt” (Fuchs). However, success or failure notwithstanding the current experience is that “the same economic and creative challenges that frustrate characters in [Bioshock and Aliens] are often at work on the very designers, programmers, and producers who bring those games to life” (Arnott).

Part Five: All That's Left Is the Choosing: Rethinking Agency in Bioshock and Beyond.

Those who programme games differ from those who author books. The task of the authors of books is to make their readers subject to them and to the books' plot in order to evoke a critical reflection from the plot, or simply to provide entertainment. In gaming, however, "the challenge for developers is to find a space for critical games in an industry that is driven by player demands" (Thorne). The *involved* choices on the part of the player ultimately result in "the ever-fluctuating definition of the human" (Brown) which often departs significantly from traditional Western understanding. "Humanity has been called an inherited deposit, and we only become fully human as we make that deposit our own."³ While this perspective may be tenable in Modernity, it is likely not to be so in the posthuman age. The reason for this, I suggest, is that Modernity, and its variants, have not succeeded in satisfactorily specifying (identifying) what it is to be human. Thus, some philosophical work remains to be done before posthuman gaming can accept a specificity of the human as the foundation upon which to design its games. (Perhaps, to be human means to lack, or defy, such specificity.) From my point of view, as was noted in the initial age of the computer, so it is this age of gaming; that is, *garbage in/garbage out*, remains a truism that cannot be ignored except to the players' peril. Improvement (not progress) is required and is, in

³ Grant, George *Philosophy in the Mass Age* (Copp Clarke, 1966:2).

fact, built into the gaming experience. Improvement, being built-in to the gaming experience, begs the question of a human definition. “The fact that players do not have consistent agency or control over the character or gameplay does not limit play or meaning – in fact, it defines them” (Wysocki & Brey). Hence the need for an appropriate interpretive philosophy of gaming as this collection of essays demonstrates.



Posthumanism: A Guide for the Perplexed, Peter Mahon (2018, Bloomsbury)

Like all worthwhile traditional travel guides not all the sights available are covered in one tour – just the most significant – leaving us to explore the side streets on our own. Mahon’s guide highlights the various sights of interest for the contemporary philosophical inquirer whose vision has been whetted to explore further what Mahon has introduced in this deeply researched and copiously noted book. My review is limited to a few observations that from a perspective I hope will encourage others to consider his research and possibly incorporate it into a Creed of Life. This is not the last word on posthumanism, as he has noted, but is certainly cutting-edge thought, as I understand him.

There is more that constitutes us humans than just ourselves, as traditionally understood within a classical Western philosophy, if Mahon’s exposé of *concrete* posthumanism is correct. Religion,

politics and philosophy are being rewritten as we enter the posthuman stage of an evolutionary process, he has suggested. In this evolutionary process, his “unit of analysis” is “humans + tools,” not just humans. In analyzing this unit, he has placed emphasis on the boundary between *human* and *tools*, which is increasingly becoming blurred. What is significant is that such blurring of boundaries (not merely a shifting of boundaries) opens the possibility for us to do consciously, in the posthuman stage of evolution, what we thought nature did unconsciously in the classical stage of evolution. In short, we as “humans + tools” consciously direct our evolution in the posthuman world. That is one conclusion I draw from his essay. Secondly, the unit “humans + tools” constitutes a changed status (within a philosophical point of view) of human beings from that of being mere creatures to being “co-creators” of themselves. Mahon’s insight has great implications for one’s Creed of Life.

Active engagement, not passive representationalism, is the key here as I understand Mahon. He writes: “I have been endeavouring to give you a concrete sense of posthumanism that actively seeks to avoid getting stuck at the superficial level of ‘representations’ or ‘images’ or ‘metaphors’ of science and technology through an insistence on engaging actively with actual techno-scientific developments and research” (p. 155). Representations, images and metaphors constitute the classical philosophical perspective

(inspired by Hellenic philosophy) whereas, engaging actively with actual techno-scientific developments and research characterize the posthuman context (inspired by attempts at existential and phenomenological dehellenization) as I understand it.

Has he succeeded with this guide? I asked myself this question in preparing this review. What overall success there may be given his efforts providing a concrete sense of posthumanism, that I do not know. But he has succeeded in clarifying for me some of the same issues that I had been pondering. My follow-up question to that was: So, what's next? To write this review I answered. On the presumption that a review is to assist the potential reader in making a decision for or against reading a book, I offer the following comments. 1) Readers and future reviewers should note the subjunctive tense throughout the guide – nothing is truly fixed and options remain. 2) If needed, brush up on classical or humanist philosophical concepts to bring Mahon's understanding of concrete posthumanism into sharper relief. 3) Heed his advice to persevere with the difficult concepts he discusses; the more information the better the understanding. 4) Read this guide as the author's attempt to put order into chaos – which was the same purpose made by classicists at their particular stage of human evolutionary self-knowledge. 5) Mahon's presentation of concrete posthumanism suggests engaging techno-scientific *reality*. To my mind, deeper probing and further clarification are needed into techno-scientific

reality in the critical style of Leslie Dewart, particularly for the more philosophically minded reader open to the possibility of reality *beyond being*. In critiquing our Hellenic heritage Dewart has suggested that *being* and *reality* are not always to be identified. Reality may be conceived of as that which is somehow *beyond being*, and not being itself, which to my mind constitutes a new perspective within one's Creed of Life.



Philosophy Through Video Games, Jon Cogburn & Mark Silcox
(2009, Routledge)

Clearly this book is intended for professional academics. However, it can serve as a point of departure to introduce anyone knowledgeable about the gaming phenomenon but lacking a philosophical background. I came across this book by happenstance and was captured by the authors' approach from the beginning especially since I am totally unfamiliar with the genesis of the contemporary gaming phenomenon. In light of gaming's popular interest, I did expect more than one philosophical review for the book on Amazon. But perhaps that speaks to the status of philosophy in contemporary North American culture. In their Preface the authors note that not all individuals are philosophically inclined and state clearly that they draw upon the resources of Western philosophy, i.e., the analytical tradition. Although, as I read through

the chapters there seemed to be moments when a phenomenological understanding (not phenomenalism) was given some expression. This review is from the point of view of a phenomenological philosopher and hopefully my observations will bring out some valued differing approaches to the interpretation between the analytic and phenomenological (Continental) ways of thinking with respect to fashioning one's Creed of Life. Naturally, not all that could be said, has been said in this review.

Chapter One: I, Player.

"The Puzzle of Personal Identity" discusses personal identity through statements *about* the person, rather than inquiring into the constitution of the person as a living organism. The authors "focus on issues about the metaphysical status of the self that arise specifically in the status of video games." For the phenomenologist, the problem here is the same as for the analytical philosopher, i.e., does the metaphysical status of the self always equate to the person? Rather than an epistemological approach to this problem the phenomenologist properly focuses on human understanding as a psychological phenomenon but interprets it philosophically. That is to say, where the epistemologist encounters *a puzzle* in life, the phenomenologist encounters the *mystery* of life. While both approaches are grounded in individual experience, a Hellenic interpretive philosophy may not be the only viewpoint for a satisfactory personal understanding. A phenomenological

philosophy of consciousness interprets an individual's *life in progress*, not a static state in life. Gaming has the potential to disclose a philosophical anthropology in describing the person, not only to provide a description of human capabilities.

Chapter Two: The Game Inside the Mind, the Mind Inside the Game.

“The Nintendo Wii Gaming Console” discusses the “tools” of gaming in light of the unsatisfactory theory of phenomenism. The authors suggest that enactivism as a theory is a better approach than phenomenism, thus they remain within the Hellenic epistemological tradition which attempts to ascertain the manner in which experience represents the way things are in themselves. The phenomenologist attempts to disclose the way things are in the experience of the person, but through the medium of consciousness, not the classical perspective of knowledge. Hence, the phenomenologist (as a philosopher of the mind) attempts to transcend the limits of analytic philosophy by identifying a different starting point for reflection, rather than develop further the scientific one which remains dominant in Western culture. The starting point for much contemporary conscious interpretation has been influenced more by Continental philosophy than by scientific methodology.

Chapter Three: “Realistic Blood and Gore”: Do Violent Games Make Violent Gamers?

“First Person Shooters” discusses the heritage of Platonic and Aristotelian philosophical understandings in approaching the design of games, particularly with respect to violence. The authors’ Hellenic, and thus Christian interpretation, makes their conclusions and preferences predictable concerning the ethical norms to be taken into account when designing games.

Chapter Four: Games and God’s Goodness,

“World-Builder and Tycoon Games” clearly reveals the traditional approach to understanding God within Western culture with all its attending problems and contradictions. The authors, being analytical philosophers, accept *reason* as the faculty that specifies the living organism as a person – an epistemological perspective rooted in classical philosophy. Many phenomenologists however, consider possessing a *self-reflexive function of consciousness* as specifying the living organism as a person – a psychological perspective considered philosophically, not clinically. Here the focus is on the person; not on principles or propositions of knowledge. Terminating this discussion, the lesson to be learned, the authors state, is that to understand God even as “a being with unimaginably vast knowledge, power, and goodness, decisions about when and how to interfere with the natural order,” would have to be atrociously difficult and demanding. The phenomenologist, however, does not

understand such difficulties arising from *God* interfering with the natural order, but rather such difficulties arise from *our* self-conscious relationships within the natural order.

Chapter Five: The Metaphysics of Interactive Art.

“Puzzle and Adventure Games” hint, as I see it, at a phenomenological understanding which is not evident in the classical heritage of Western philosophy. That is, the creative participation of the observer in what is observed is a novel perspective with no antecedent in Hellenic philosophy. This changes the overall paradigm from a purely Hellenic one, where Fate rules the day, to a phenomenological one, where humans contribute to the determination of their future. The authors speak of *The Objectivity Argument*, which is an active process and not to be confused with “objectivism” which is an ideal concept. (When philosophizing in English, individuals often confuse “-ity” words with “-ism” words. Although addressing the same phenomenon, they do not mean the same. Consider this statement: *I respect your nationality, but I am suspicious of your nationalism*. In short, the latter is less than the former and can be interpreted negatively.) Such distinction is often not clearly made or understood by contemporary philosophers. The objectivity argument attaches to the person, not to an external norm. In fact, I can learn much from understanding human personal psychology. In short, for the phenomenologist intersubjectivity (an activity) replaces external norms (objective ideals). Drawing on

Stanley Fish the authors then speak of a player's actions and decisions understood as "coconstituting the work of art" (p. 100).

Chapter Six, Artificial and Human Intelligence

"Single-Player RPGs" treats of Artificial Intelligence in the context of time. Predictably, a Hellenist approach to time is accepted without question. That is, time is linear, not cyclic. Philosophically, cyclic time has no beginning, nor end, as linear time does. As well, the correspondence theory of truth is accepted by these authors as the norm. In explaining the development of CRUM (Computational-Representational Understanding of Mind), it is presumed that the rules of the English language (or Western idiom, if you prefer) are operative and these have contributed the basics of a "computer language." The discussion of the phenomenon of AI is undertaken from this perspective. Given that the ontic culture of the West, and not a phenomenological culture, has given rise to computer science, this is not surprising. After acknowledging that the "flexible adaptive behavior characteristic of human cognition," to use the authors' words, is an activity, not a fixed reality, the authors then ironically enter on a discussion of "fixing" the content of thought. For the contemporary philosopher content is dynamic, not fixed. Flexible adaptive behavior has not, to date at least, been replicated by computers, as I understand. At present, most phenomenologists do not hold out any expectation that a non-living entity ever will spontaneously *adapt* itself to its environment. The "I'm sorry, Dave

I can't do that" remark of *2001 Space Odyssey* fame remains in the imagination and as a puzzle to the analytical philosopher. It presents, however, as a possible mystery for the contemporary philosopher who questions the "fixity" of content.

Epilogue

"Video Games and the Meaning of Life," as the final chapter, sums up the whole thrust of the authors' purpose which, as I understand it, is to investigate the games as a means to introduce philosophical thinking. Which makes gaming a potential useful tool in fashioning a Creed of Life. However, this enterprise has considered only the Western analytical perspective, which is not surprising since it is highly doubtful that the computer phenomenon could have arisen in any context but the Western scientific tradition with its roots in Hellenic philosophy. This observation might be taken into account when fashioning one's Creed of Life. This insight is similar to the notion that atheism could only have arisen with the Christian culture, (due to modern scientific criticism) and not in any phenomenological culture. The whole book reads, to my mind, as an exercise in the "fine tuning" approach to classical philosophy through gaming. But there is more. The authors remark: "And perhaps, therefore, philosophical questions about the meaning of life are better re-phrased as questions about what we are to do with ourselves *"after"* we have finished all of our basic, unalterable biological 'functions'" (p. 154). I would suggest that this *to do*

question could be replaced with a *who am I* question inquiring into the meaning of a Creed of Life. That is, the awareness of the time spent gaming is not as revealing philosophically in contemporary culture as *who* is gaming, it seems to me.



I am not a Brain: Philosophy of Mind for the Twenty-first Century, Markus Gabriel (2017, Polity Press)

Gabriel's book amounts to presenting a threshold for posthuman philosophical thinking. My review of his book is limited to one significant concept: that of human consciousness and his contribution to the understanding of it. Since it is after consciousness that all else about the human mind follows. Referring to human consciousness, he writes: "We are once again dealing here with old wine in new bottles" (p. 130). Consciousness belongs to the mind and, there is no objective solution to the question of the mind, according to Gabriel. However, subjectively the mind has the capacity to create self-conceptions, he maintains. Besides material realities, "immaterial realities" also exist which cannot be investigated by the natural sciences. Nor do these immaterial realities belong to another world. They are part of this world. Here his perspective is reminiscent of that of the religious philosopher Leslie Dewart (1922-2009) who argued that only one world exists, that is, the one in which we currently live. There is no other world

affording humanity a better life, he maintained. Gabriel's view supports a duality since he holds that there is no mind (an immaterial thing) without a brain (a material thing). Mind and brain are distinguishable, but not separable. From my perspective this view amounts to a preservation (although altered) of Hellenic metaphysical principles interpreted phenomenologically and are often somewhat forgotten by philosophers of modernity. Gabriel insists that contemporary sciences cannot avoid a role for philosophy in the interpretation of technological social experience.

Influenced by the Continental tradition in philosophy, Gabriel distinguishes philosophy of mind from philosophy of consciousness. He avoids thinking of the mind as equivalent to consciousness. However, such equivalency often occurs in the Anglo-American philosophical tradition. Unless I have misread him, he thinks it is a mistake to view the human mental life as part of the directionless world of the natural sciences. Human mental life always has motives, and he suggests that Hellenic inspired metaphysics (reflecting fixed conceptual thinking) is "just another form of superstitious overextension of one model of explanation over the entirety of the cosmos, a modern form of mythology" (p. 44).

Knowing that we are conscious is not equivalent to knowing what consciousness is (a moment's reflection confirms this). Human

consciousness allows the human being the unique capacity to say “I.” However, the philosophical form needed to manifest this “I” is not clearly understood, as yet. In our techno-scientific age the classical concept *animal rationale* no longer specifies the human being as it had in classical times, he believes. Rather, the human being is a conscious *self* that knows some *thing*, including itself, and is able to communicate it to others and to itself. Leslie Dewart articulated much the same notion earlier when he distinguished between thematic and non-thematic speech. “We shall see, however, that the ability to experience meaningfully is the basis of self-definition, the creation of a self that is meaningful to itself: therefore, the thematic consciousness may be best referred to as the ‘self-defining’ mode of conscious life”⁴ Gabriel’s whole work is a subtle appeal to retain philosophy (of consciousness) as a legitimate concern in itself, countering the tendency in the English-speaking world to “outsource philosophical issues from philosophy to natural science, which is a fundamental mistake” (p. 176). Gabriel notes that a “realm of ends” specifies the conscious human being. In the “realm of ends,” or purposes there is no Hellenic sense of an *essence* needed for an understanding of the individual human being. Rather, “the realm of ends is a system of concepts that we use to make conscious human action understandable to ourselves” which is characteristic

⁴ Dewart, Leslie *Evolution and Consciousness: The Role of Speech in the Origin and Development of Human Consciousness* (University of Toronto Press, 1989:118).

of posthumanity (p. 206). In my view Gabriel's insights ought to be considered in the formation of one's Creed of Life. However, while I am sympathetic to Gabriel's overall assessment of the current situation constituting a threshold of posthumanism, I cannot help but conclude that he is less optimistic about the future of posthumanity than I am. "It is a central task of philosophy to work on an avatar of the human mind that can be led into the field, in the sense of an ideology critique, against the empty promises of a post-human age" (p. 220).



Doing Philosophy: From Common Curiosity to Logical Reasoning
Timothy Williamson (2018, Oxford University Press)

As I evaluate it, this is a book on ideas philosophically understood from within the analytic tradition which seriously tries to avoid the ultimate problem of skepticism. In the Introduction, Williamson notes Descartes' "radical strategy of doubting what he could, including the whole world outside his mind, in order to rebuild science on the firm foundation of the few remaining certainties" (p. 1). Prior to its professional status in academia, philosophy is in our lives both in trivial and important ways, the author maintains. In other words, philosophy is there as common sense. With this observation, I have no quarrel. But having read Leslie Dewart's (1922-2009) *Hume's Challenge and the Renewal of Modern*

Philosophy, published posthumously, I do not concur with many of Williamson's conclusions, since I am a philosopher who favours the phenomenological perspective. He seems to be aware of such a possibility when he writes: "Many philosophers will hate my picture of how to do philosophy. I leave the reader to judge" (p. 5).

I am not convinced that stagnated state of contemporary philosophy (as Dewart described it) is remedied by philosophers embracing the "appropriate scientific methods for answering their questions, which are questions of the traditional ambitious kind" (p. 5). However, that is not to say that the book is not worth the time taken to read it. In Chapter 9 Williamson advances some ways by which philosophy "learns from elsewhere" (p. 111). He concludes the book by expressing the hope that philosophical methods can be improved, (possibly with the assistance of a future reader of his essay) just as scientific methods have been improved over time. I share a similar hope for the development of philosophy but, in light of Dewart's insights, my hope is expressed through a phenomenological perspective in fashioning a Creed of Life.



Technology and the Virtues: A Philosophical Guide to a Future Worth Wanting Shannon Vallor (2016, Oxford University Press)

"While ethics has always been embedded in technological contexts, humans have, until very recently, been the primary authors of their

moral choices, and the consequences of those choices were usually restricted to impacts on individual or local group welfare. Today, however, our aggregated moral choices in technological contexts routinely impact the well-being of people on the other side of the planet, a staggering number of other species and whole generations not yet born” (p. 2).

Comment: I fail to understand how in their “aggregated moral choices” humans do not remain primary authors of their moral choices, as the author seems to imply.

“Such complexities [of the contemporary human situation] remind us that predicting the general shape of tomorrow’s innovations is not in fact, our biggest challenge: far harder, and more significant, is the job of figuring out what we will *do* with these technologies once we have them, and what they will do with *us*. This cannot be done without attending to a host of interrelated political, cultural, economic, environmental, and historical factors that co-direct human innovation and practice” [Vallor’s emphasis] (p. 5).

Comment: The human being is the only consciously deliberate agent in moral ethical situations. I see no reason to posit any conscious deliberate initiative on the part of human environmental factors, unless it is another human being, of course. I distinguish between movement and action. While parts of the human being’s environment may *move*, they do not consciously *act*.

“To see what *relational understanding* is and why it is essential to the practice of moral self-cultivation, it helps to recognize how classical virtue traditions conceive of the human person: namely, as a *relational being*, someone whose identity is formed through a network of relationships. While some virtue traditions regard one’s relationships with other living things, objects, places, or deities as part of one’s unique identity, *all* virtue traditions acknowledge the central importance of our formative relationships with other human beings: our family, friends, neighbors, citizens, teachers, leaders, and models” [Vallor’s emphasis] (p. 76).

Comment: It is a bit of a stretch, I think, in *classical* virtue ethics to recognize a person’s identity as formed by relationships. (Perhaps she means character.) Her suggestion of relational formation, in fact, belongs to a distinct contemporary philosophy of consciousness that requires the rejection of the Hellenic concepts of essence and existence, characteristic of classical philosophy in forming personal identity.

In discussing “competing visions of human (or Posthuman) flourishing” on page 231 she opts not to expand on the clarification and significant difference between “transhumanism” and “a coming posthuman era” for reasons of space, as she admits in an endnote (p. 277). “For reasons of space, this [discussion] passes over two key distinctions: the first is between the strong transhumanist program for enhancement and more modest enhancement goals that stop short of radical alteration of the human species. The second is the distinction between “transhuman” and “posthuman” philosophies; some transhumanists explicitly call for a posthuman future, that is,

one in which humanity has been surpassed. Others ... reject the notion of leaving our humanity behind, while simultaneously regarding the nature of our humanity as almost infinitely malleable. Finally, there are uses of “posthuman” in literary theory, gender, and culture studies ... that do not map neatly onto the transhumanist conception of posthumanity. Both distinctions are important but fluid and contested.”

Comment: To my mind, the very reasons she cites to pass over in this distinction ought to merit a deeper and more serious study with regard to the formation of a Creed of Life. A return to classical principles, no matter how successfully “tweaked” cannot do justice to this contemporary philosophical question. Our human experience already indicates that the products of digital technology are not impossible fictions in many cases, and we experience the boundaries of such products, not as “fixed” (as is Hellenistic philosophy) but as fluid (as in phenomenological philosophy). Since human experience has not ceased to evolve, since the human being has not ceased to evolve, it follows that to be human is not a static state, but a fluid one subject to further evolutionary development — under the direction of a conscious human agent — unlike the previous process of pre-conscious biological evolution. That is to say, “pre-conscious humanity” has been surpassed by a “conscious humanity,” which, potentially, may be surpassed again in the future. That there are “uses of ‘posthuman’ in literary theory. gender, and culture studies”

that do not integrate well with our present understanding is no reason to opt for an up-dating of the classics, and ignore an alternate philosophical approach that is likely to be more fitting to contemporary human experience. To my mind, this rejection is a major weakness of Vallor's approach to the whole challenge of technology and virtues, which cannot be resolved by a sophisticated return to traditional thinking.

A note for the theologically erudite: It might be advantageous to view Vallor's perspective at updating classical philosophy to meet the experience of the contemporary age as similar to that of the ecclesiastical authorities at Vatican II. Their attempt at updating theology was to engage with the experience of the modern world. They opted for an *aggiornamento*, rather than for a *ressourcement* of philosophical thought, the latter being the more resourceful.



Journeys: The Impact of Personal Experience on Religious Thought Gregory Baum (1975, Paulist Press)

With the presumption that our early biography influences the way we think, Baum sought to detect “styles of theology” of notable American theologians during the 1970s. Their stories, he writes, “persuade us that hidden in our lives are resources for reflection.” (p. 2) My review supports Baum's conclusion. However, in fashioning their Creed of Life, readers may assess these stories

differently.

Being somewhat a contemporary of these individuals, I read with interest their recollection of their histories that unfolded within the American religious context of the 1950s and 1960s. Studying theology in the 1960s and 1970s, I was aware, through reputation only, of some of the individuals that Baum invited to tell their story. However, I did read the work of some others more deeply as part of my own course work.

I first became aware of Baum's book in 2019, not aware that it existed since 1975. I discovered a common attitude in the contributors' accounts which I believe reflected accurately "the sign of the times," to use a Vatican II expression. Despite their diverse starting points, they all arrived at the common conclusion of looking forward to an optimistic future that, in fact, never materialized, or at least has yet to unfold. In the bullets below, I summarize their respective visions.

- **Gregory Baum's** personal revelation was that, after a traditional education: "The study of this 'new' theology was extraordinarily liberating for me. I readily followed the new theological perspective, even though it took me many years to work out for myself the many implications of the new view point. What was demanded of me was a total rethinking of the theology I had studied: there was not a single topic that remained unaffected by the new perspective. Eventually

the very doctrine of God would have to be rethought, for if the divine mystery is present in man's discovery of herself as situated in the human world, and is operative in man's ongoing creation of her future, then God is not extrinsic to human life but the gracious presupposition of man's humanity and hence in no way, however qualified, a possible object of the human mind" (p. 22). Anyone familiar with Leslie Dewart's perspective on the philosophy of human consciousness will recognize the significance of Baum's comment.

(Baum died in 2017 at the age of 94. He left the priesthood in 1974 and subsequently married without ecclesiastical permission. In his last book, *The Oil Has Not Run Dry* he recounts his first homosexual experience at the age of 40.)

- Somewhat naïvely, it seems to me, **Rosemary Radford Ruether** confirms her tenacity to Catholic Christianity at the end of her story. "Catholicism, for me, is my paradigm for the human dilemma. I relate to it, not as a repository of truth by which to make a fixed identity, but as a terrible example of what we all are. It is in much the same way that I am passionately an American. It is impossible for me to do otherwise. This is my history, my people. It might be more pleasant to be a Quaker or a Canadian, with less time, less opportunity, less power for evil, but perhaps also more dull" (p. 55). She engaged in an "exciting" life in the Church via women's studies,

liberation theology and related activities. (Born in 1936 she is alive at the time of writing.)

- Admitting that the American religious and secular loyalty was shaken in his time **David J. O'Brien**, a noted Catholic historian, was still able to pen these words. "Throughout my life, people in and out of the Catholic community have constantly helped me to discover unknown parts of myself. I continue to believe that we in the Catholic community could do great work in the world if we could constantly offer one another a challenge and an invitation. The challenge — to change our lives to become more fully a people living for others — and the invitation — to be part of a community of people trying to do the same — both derive from a continued faith in Jesus Christ, whose promises remain ever before us, calling us to be better than we thought we could be, together, all of us, with him" (p. 85). (David O'Brien is alive at the time of writing.)
- **Charles Curran** concludes his essay on a personal note after discussing his theological development "in terms of events and the thoughts of others" that had influenced him (p. 114). Reflecting on his personal situation, he had come to recognize that, "although I am constantly impatient with the rate of change in the Church, the recognition of my own sinfulness and of how slow I am to change has made me more patient (perhaps too patient at times) with regard to progress and change in the Church" (p. 114). Despite his criticism of the Church, he remained a true supporter on a very profound

level, but he said that there is a stubbornness in him that also contributes to his willingness to take controversial stands. He sums up his reflection by this significant and psychologically accurate description: “In fact, my own experience in writing this essay has made me even more conscious of the influence that personality, events, personal history, and the thoughts of others have had on my theological development” (p. 116). In 2009, a reviewer for the *National Catholic Reporter* wrote: “Curran is unusual. Too many scholars serve narrow factional interests, be they national, political, economic or religious, all the while denying that social and political responsibility has anything to do with their pursuit of truth. ... Curran, in contrast, takes all these responsibilities seriously.” (Charles Curran is alive at the time of writing.)

- **Monika Hellwig’s** participation in a “multidimensional” community gave her an opportunity “to observe some very extraordinary Christians, as well as some of the great European scholars far beyond the small circle [she] met earlier at the Notre Dame Summer School of Theology” (p. 142). This allowed her to draw the conclusion: “When I reflect on what theology is for me now, I realize that first of all it is not a career I have chosen but a task that somehow landed in front of me to be done. Secondly, it is a task that is done primarily from the resources of my own life experience within a great tradition that I am very happy to have internalized, for which I have the deepest affection and respect, and

for which I consider myself co-responsible. Beyond that it is a task in which intellectual endeavors are only the tip of the iceberg that shows. The reason I engage in it is mainly that it gives me great satisfaction and that it seems to meet a need as basic as those I set out to meet in Liverpool and had hoped to meet in India. In particular, it seems to me that there is great confusion, uncertainty, and a crisis not only of understanding but also of confidence among Catholics today. I do not think Catholicism is the only way to live. I believe I would have found the same kind of deep-rootedness had I been raised Jewish or Hindu, but of my own tradition I know unfailingly from the inside that it makes total sense. I want to draw on my experience to assure my fellow Catholics that the mandalas do not break” (p. 145). As I understand her contribution to these essays, ultimately from a small circle of theologians through to a multidimensional religious experience she internalized a larger, but still particular Church. (She died in Washington, DC in 2005, aged 75.)

- As an exception to the earlier contributors, **Eulalio Baltazar’s** piece does not end with a sense of particular community, church or otherwise. His experiences and reflections have brought him to appreciate a sense of transcendence appropriate to the human community. “My present state of philosophical and theological reflection is one of transition from process thought to poetic and mystical thinking. There is profound truth in the saying that a

philosopher is a frustrated poet. Having been educated in the West, my thinking has been for the most part scientific, logical, and rational as opposed to the imaginative and poetic ways of Eastern thought. Process thought and philosophy are the products of conceptual, rational, and logical thinking. But reality is deeper than what can be grasped by rational, conceptual, and philosophical thinking. ... But today, with the increasing interest in the occult, the mysterious, in the religions of the East, perhaps a theology based on the imagination and expressed in poetic form would be a more effective means of leading the modern mind to a communication with the Transcendent. We must insist here however that Transcendence is not found by an escape from the world, but through the world, and the world where the Transcendent is found is in the suffering, the sick, the oppressed, the exploited, the poor” (p. 164). Similar to Baum’s perspective, anyone familiar with Leslie Dewart’s perspective on the philosophy of human consciousness will recognize parallels in Baltazar’s story. (Eulalio Baltazar, a liberation theologian, is alive at the time of writing.)

- **Andrew Greeley** remarked that his accomplishments outlined in this essay are *aliquid* (something, but not very much) and the things in which he invested his selfhood “have all failed.” With respect to his contribution to the religious life he concluded: “My life, as well as my thought, has been empirical, pragmatic, ad hoc. I have thought and lived playing it by ear. When faced with a new opportunity or a

new idea or a new project, I have for the most part said, why not? And when it was a question of speaking out or holding my tongue, over the last ten years I have rarely done the latter” (p. 204). With respect to serving the Church (blemishes and all) he wrote: “I became a sociologist to serve the Church, but it became apparent that I had acquired the skills mostly in vain. The choice was clear: I could go on being a sociologist and become more and more excluded from the Church, or I could give up sociology and come in out of the cold. I said to hell with them” (p. 193). The desire to form his personal Creed of Life is evident in his theological attitude from which others will no doubt take inspiration. (Andrew Greeley died in 2013 at his home in Chicago.)

- Neither a reassessment, nor a deeper investigation into philosophical consciousness is the outcome of **Anthony Padovano’s** essay. His contemporary and future Church is characterized by poetry, not philosophy. In his acceptance of a poetic Church, he does not explicitly deny the existence of a philosophical Church. He writes: “I wrote *Free to Be Faithful* as a symbol for those who needed symbols to sense their aliveness. In that book, I left forever the Ptolemaic universe and I ended my acceptance of Aristotle as the norm for my thinking. I had no regrets for the passage or the parting nor any remorse for the former association. But I required a freedom not from my past thinking but for my future work. ... Fidelity to this task demanded the freedom to make symbols as the rational universe

collapsed and to express hope as the Church I once knew died a long overdue death. It was time for the twentieth century to dawn and to enlighten a new Church with its grace. It was time for the Church to go on a journey, with meager means and provisional priorities. It was time to abandon rigidity and to make symbols in the pale light of a new age” (p. 134). In hindsight and in light of one’s own experience Padovano’s optimism may be questioned as to whether it was ever fully realized by a large number of contemporary faithful in formulating their Creed of Life. (He is alive at the time of writing.)

- **Gabriel Moran** seems to have found a *raison d’être* outside the theology of institutional Christianity. He appears, in his thinking, not to be that far from the thinking of many 21st Century Christians. “In conclusion of the first part of this essay I wish to note that all three of the [previously mentioned] communal influences come together in the feminist movement. Since the late 1960s I have been acutely aware that the women’s movement is the key to both the deficiencies of Christian theology and the kind of imagery and language needed in future religious bodies. ... In recent years my religious interest has continued to grow, but I am no longer able to call myself a Christian theologian. Not that I became some other kind of theologian or that I joined some other religion. I am a Roman Catholic to the marrow and even if I wished to ‘leave the Church’ (which I don’t) it would take decades of work to do so. Nonetheless,

I consider the word theology to be etymologically and historically unsalvageable. I am interested these days in the metaphors, symbolism, imagery, and words that people use in trying to be religious. I find it neither necessary nor helpful to introduce the word theology into the discussion. Many people find my position arbitrary if not unintelligible, but I see no way to explore today's religious questions within the restrictions of Christian theology" (p. 244 & 253). Theologians of a certain age (and experience) may view his personal insight into contemporary issues as prophetic. Gabriel Moran left the Brothers of the Christian Schools, (De La Salle Brothers) whom he joined in 1954, and was given a release from his religious vows in 1985 by the Holy See. In April 1986 he wed his colleague, Maria Harris, who had left the convent in 1973. They remained married until her death in 2005. (In January 2020 he was invited to re-join the Brothers as an affiliated member.)

- Interestingly, **Richard P. McBrien** sates: "I am reasonably certain that I would never have gone into theology had I not been ordained, from the earliest years of my conscious existence, to the Catholic priesthood" (p. 256). He later explains, "Undoubtedly, my longstanding interest in politics and political philosophy has nourished and sustained my academic and pastoral concern for ecclesiastical reform. If I had an opportunity now to become something other than a theologian, I should probably choose to be a United States senator, a college president, a constitutional lawyer,

and a nationally syndicated political columnist, roughly in that order — or any combination thereof” (p. 269). His dissatisfaction with the ecclesiastical political order (particularly in Catholic universities) prompted him to see a possible solution, not in institutional reform directly, but in reform of theological thinking. That is, that theologians must think critically and not parrot popular trends in Catholic cultural experience. In conclusion, he writes: “What the theologian — and the systematic theologian in particular — requires is insight, judgment, and decisiveness. The sooner he or she is liberated from the sheer mechanisms of bibliographic exploration, the sooner he or she can do theology. For too long we have celebrated the mechanics (those with wide command of languages and even wider chunks of privacy and free time), and deplored our thinkers. ... The systematic thinker, on the other hand, probes, criticizes, diagnoses, and prescribes. And the bureaucracy marginalizes him. ... If this situation perdures, the Catholic Church will continue to forfeit the services of some of its most creative people” (p. 270). (Fr. Richard McBrien died in 2015.)

Finally, I draw to the attention of anyone inspired to fashion a personal Creed of Life from reading these accounts that these authors wrote at a time when two significant events had yet to take place in the Church which are subsequently affecting, perhaps unknowingly so, many contemporary philosophers and theologians. They are 1) the Internet, along with the development of the World

Wide Web, as a digital cultural phenomenon, and 2) the global media-disseminated sexual scandals of the clergy and religious within the Church. However, whether either of these events would have had an influence on the stories presented here must remain speculation.



Hume's Challenge and the Renewal of Modern Philosophy Leslie Dewart (2016, Privately Published)

This book is not included in Baum's *Journeys* for obvious reasons. But I consider it to be a transitional intellectual account by a religious philosopher on the threshold of posthuman thought whose insights have influenced my own thinking. This book is a final version of Dewart's notes edited by Cajetan J. Menke and done very faithfully in retaining Dewart's style of writing as it was posthumously published. This work, to my mind, will be of interest to the seasoned and perhaps disaffected philosopher tired with the variations on the classical themes in Western philosophy. In short, to my mind, the book is a prelude to a new approach within the Western philosophy of mind. "Representationism," in which perception transfers the contents of reality into the mind, is rejected as an outdated legacy of ancient Greek philosophy. Rather, Dewart suggests that "the philosophers invented the institution of scholarship *ab initio*, by taking advantage of the characteristics of

the human mind” to replace representationism (p. 91). This results in a contemporary understanding of philosophy to mean using the mind in a disciplined reasoned manner to arrive at a better explanation of human experience. To arrive at a better understanding first requires a probe into the failure of modern philosophy to understand the human mind, followed by an attempt to re-conceive, or re-interpret, contemporary experience without the aid of Greek metaphysics. Like all Dewart’s works, this book is not an easy read. However, perseverance will certainly reveal philosophical insights to the reader’s benefit in formulating a Creed of Life. As Dewart admits: “Now, if this is true, it follows that, if modern philosophy should manage to re-orient itself, reject representationism, and develop a sound understanding of human nature and its cognitive powers, our culture might conceivably embrace secularity in a consistent and healthy manner and abandon the insanities and idiocies that have been fostered by its confusions about itself and its relationship to the world” (p. 203). His investigation into the stagnation of Western philosophy, though not completed as a polished project by Dewart himself, is a valuable contribution within the historic development of Western philosophical thought. It should prove useful to anyone contemplating a contemporary Creed of Life.

PARTICULAR PUBLICATIONS FOUNDATIONAL TO A CREED OF LIFE

I wrote the following books, foundational to my particular Creed of Life, between 2000 and 2020 but they are not arranged in chronological order. They treat of various themes in philosophy, theology and psychology all written critically in light of the development of postmodern and posthuman philosophy. Some were only printed a year or so after they were written given the expectation that time might alter my thinking.



Leslie Dewart (1922-2009) Canada's Forgotten Theological Philosopher: A Review of His Major Works

In the course of my presentation of Dewart's philosophy in this book, I shall note particular insights of two other thinkers, whose religious philosophy I accept as dehellenized in Dewart's meaning of the term. Auguste Sabatier (1839-1901) and Paul Trudinger, (1930-) never employ the term *dehellenization* as far as I can

determine. Both Sabatier and Trudinger base their philosophical interpretation on personal experience which amounts to a personal Creed of Life, as I interpret them. Both suggest that one must often decide against what one has been taught by religious authorities of their day. Trudinger gives examples from his belief in the Christian Creed and Sabatier gives examples from the philosophy and theology of the French Protestant Church in his time. For Trudinger, the decision against one's earlier instruction is a "shift in faith," not a "loss of faith." For Sabatier, "autonomy, in action, transforms authority by gradually displacing its seat. So much the more does authority contribute to the development of autonomy. From their interaction results the progress of humanity." To my mind, both philosophical attitudes, Trudinger's "shift in faith" and Sabatier's "active autonomy," are what Dewart describes as dehellénization of the philosophical attitude, in a positive sense.

Each in his unique philosophical way, Sabatier, Trudinger and Dewart deliberately reach out to others, and share a philosophical desire to improve upon their generation's philosophical perspective. Sabatier says referring to himself: "If he does all that in him lies to bind up his sheaf, it is that he may give to others an idea of the fertility of the field in which he has labored, and thus attract to it new labourers stronger and more able than himself."⁵ Trudinger remarks, "I write as one who believes that there many more 'out

⁵ Sabatier, Auguste *Religions of Authority and the Religion of the Spirit*. (Hodder & Stoughton, 1899:378).

there’ who have had the kinds of ‘shifts in faith’ that I have experienced. ... These people may appreciate having a spokesperson for their position!”⁶ And Leslie Dewart (1922-2009) expresses the thought that “it is not out of the question that in the future there should be other attempts, besides mine, to understand the historical causes of the failure of modern philosophy, and attempt to remedy them. And if such attempts reach the correct conclusions that may have escaped me, they should yield more adequate proposals than mine.”⁷ I have reviewed Dewart’s major works in light of the fact that they are useful as a preparation to one’s formation of a Creed of Life, but are not the last word on the subject.



*Critical Thinkers on the Threshold of Posthuman Philosophy:
William Gladstone & George Tyrrell*

In this essay, George Drazenovich and I collaborated on the possibility of posthuman philosophy within the religious and theological schools of thought out of which I fashioned my Creed of Life. However, that intent is not explicitly stated and the book is a consensus of our thought. In doing this, I did not focus on the traditional philosophical humanism which characterizes the scholastic and neo-scholastic approach within Western philosophy.

⁶ Trudinger, Paul *Leaves from the Note Book of an Unashamed Heretic* (Frye & Co, 1988:3).

⁷ Dewart, Leslie *Hume’s Challenge and the Renewal of Modern Philosophy* (Privately Published Posthumously, 2016:464).

Rather, I focused on a “dehellenized” philosophical way of thinking that, I believe, characterizes the thresholds of a posthuman philosophical consciousness. That is to say, the Hellenistic philosophical principles that support Western humanism, are not used to support my understanding of a philosophy appropriate to posthumanity. As an existential philosopher, with a view to evolving as a posthuman philosopher, I evaluated aspects of the philosophical consciousness of the politician William Gladstone (1809-1898) and the theologian George Tyrrell (1861–1909) in terms of both humanism and posthumanism from a phenomenological philosophical perspective. I realize that the phenomenological notion of humanity (in contrast to the classical idea of humanism) may not be adequately grasped by all philosophers. It seems to me that although many professionals appear to be somewhat conversant with general philosophical and theological notions, they are nonetheless struggling to clarify their understanding of an emerging posthuman philosophy within the formulation of their Creed of Life.



Reconstruction in Western Theism

This book is a personal account, not an historical account or chronological one. The approach taken reflects the metamorphosis from a classical to a contemporary view of theology within the formulation of my Creed of Life. It stresses that through personal engagement with the spirit of God one may begin to understand

religious experience, thereby establishing one's personal faith convictions. The primary purpose of theological study is spiritual growth, while intellectual understanding is of secondary importance. The deepening of theological understanding has been achieved, it appears, not by the influence of ecclesiastical officials, but by faithful individuals and even sometimes in opposition to official ecclesial interpretation. Furthermore, individuals need to accept their co-creative status with that which is divine. A viable future Church must relinquish its hold on sovereignty and centralization and institute an effective decision-making process through the principle of subsidiarity. To my mind, an incursion into the Modernist movement should clarify new interpretations arising within theological thinking in light of the development of the future Church. This book serves not only as an informative guide to reflection on the interpretation of truth, but also as a serious read for any student of theology. The theological reconstruction of theism most likely will compel the reader to examine his or her own life in the formulation of a Creed of Life.



Reflections on Ecological Philosophy in Light of Dehellenized Western Theism

This book is intended for the serious reader of Western philosophy with a particular interest in the ecology. It is not an introductory text to philosophical interpretation, but a seasoned reflection as one who

accepts that he is living at the threshold of a posthuman philosophical movement in the Anglo-American context. The book is written from a phenomenological philosophical perspective, rather than an analytical perspective which is rooted in Hellenistic metaphysical philosophy. It is written to illustrate an alternative approach to understanding a contemporary social issue – the treatment of the human environment – from a philosophical perspective rather than from that of the modern sciences. It is divided into two parts that initially may seem unrelated. The first part is an introduction to the background that has given the rationale for writing the second part. Together, from reading both parts, one may recognize that the treatment of the environment must include the spiritual as well as the physical aspect that constitute the human environment. Ecologists seeking to establish a Creed of Life may find some of the perspectives I introduce in the book to be useful in their efforts.



Posthuman Theological Reflections

This is a book on what I understand to be exploratory of posthuman philosophy undertaken as I was inquiring into the elements of a Creed of Life. It is not a book on posthumanism, but rather interprets the pre-existing philosophical developments that lead up to the phenomenon of posthumanity. Posthuman philosophy is a contemporary philosophy that does not rely on the principles of

ancient Greek metaphysics for its foundational principles of knowledge. Classical Western philosophy, i.e., scholasticism, heavily influenced by Hellenistic thought placed emphasis on reason as the distinguishing quality of mind that separated the human being from the animal being. Without denying reason, phenomenology, which I consider a posthuman philosophy, specifies the human being as a self-conscious agent who directs the evolution of its lived-in environment. By this self-conscious direction of their environment human agents have “surpassed” the humanism of the Renaissance as well as the humanism of the secular Western culture and now stands on the threshold of a new stage of the evolutionary process of human thought, hence the term *posthuman*. The book was inspired by the thinking of George Tyrrell (1861–1909) and Leslie Dewart (1922–2009).



Beyond the Breakwater: Venturing into Posthuman Philosophical Waters

This book is not a devotional or pious work, nor is it a professional academic work. It is intended as an address to the educated and philosophically interested reader as well as the seasoned and possibly disaffected religious thinker. In short, it was written in an attempt to satisfy my intellectual interest when contemplating contemporary philosophical and theological notions where traditional understanding had failed. In my current understanding of

a Creed of Life, posthuman consciousness does not totally replace humanistic consciousness in Western philosophy, but rather, co-exists as an alternative *philosophical attitude* along-side humanism and other various philosophical fons (in the archival sense) characteristic of current Western philosophical thinking. An alternative philosophical attitude is a continuous conscious stance within one's culture as successor to mythical interpretation. Thus, elements of humanist philosophy will be evident in a posthuman philosophy. I envision philosophy, humanistic as well as posthuman, not as a formal discipline reserved to academics in universities, but as a natural human intellectual activity characteristic of all critically thinking individuals.



Faith and Queer Consciousness: Philosophical Thinking in a New Key

This is a book on Western philosophy. And in the Western tradition philosophy can serve theology as theologians know. Thus, my thinking is philosophical and at the same time is related to theology. While the two are distinct within the Western Christian context they are not unrelated as some contemporary philosophers might suggest. However, I contend that philosophy, as an interpretive tool, used within theological interpretation could help anyone seeking knowledge of queer issues in a religious context. Philosophy then becomes an introspective activity as well as an objective inquiry. In

that case, individuals must look at themselves and perceive more than what lies on the surface of their experience. They must take into account their personal evolutionary history, overcome the negative consequences of past failures in interpreting life's tasks, and subsequently reorient themselves to the future. This is clearly an approach that will assist in the correct formulation of a Creed of Life. Within this undertaking, they would be philosophizing in a new key. Philosophizing in a new key means that the sexual peculiarities of human nature are to be recognized and respected in light of LGBTQ issues. This recognition of sexual peculiarities and subsequent respect for human nature have significant consequences for the gay person seeking to remain among the Christian faithful.



Philosophy is a Destabilizing Inquiry

Philosophy, when understood as a new kind of “ordering of knowledge,” in the mental activity of philosophers often destabilizes the person. This frequently happens when one undertakes to establish a Creed of Life. Disruptions in one's philosophical thinking often cause disruptions in other disciplines and practical areas of one's life. This is so since philosophy, when not considered as a classical discipline with its inherent structure of formal principles, can be used to seek, not “order,” but used to identify “dis-order” in one's existential context. Identifying dis-order is not a negative activity since dis-order is not to be equated with chaos as

some uncritical philosophers may be inclined to do. Rather, I suggest that dis-order is simply a novel and alternative way to understand diversity on the threshold of posthumanity. That is to say, to understand philosophy in a non-classical way.



The 'Avant-Garde' Theology of George Tyrrell: Its Philosophical Roots Changed My Theological Thinking

My contention for many years has been that theological problems are first, and principally, philosophical problems and need to be addressed as such if one is planning to establish a Creed of Life. I began forming this view during my undergraduate years when I studied philosophy and was introduced to the theological perspective of George Tyrrell (1861–1909). Further, the philosophical perspective of one of my professors at St Michael's College, University of Toronto, Leslie Dewart (1922–2009); contributed significantly to the formation of my convictions. Dewart's understanding of *dehellenization*, a philosophical concept which is not to be confused with the negative concept of *unhellenization*, provided an opportunity for fresh reflection on my inherited classical understanding which was presenting interpretive problems for me. Through an examination and review of their writings, I related the thought of George Tyrrell and Leslie Dewart. I then contrasted this relationship with my understanding. I have continued investigating this relationship in order to aid in my quest

as a contemporary seeker of wisdom. I leave it to the reader to decide whether or not my reflections have clarified the issues or clouded them. It is unfortunate that, at this time in the development of religious ideas in the Western context the place of philosophy, in relation to theology, seems to have been usurped to a great extent by sociology and psychology. And I am sure that many contemporary theologians are the poorer for it. Those readers who may not be philosophically inclined, but favour sociology and psychology as interpretive disciplines, may uncover insights not previously realized, should they persevere in formulating a Creed of Life in light of contemporary philosophy.

I discuss my personal process of re-constructing a Christian theology in terms of formulating a Creed of Life in this book from a subjective point of view. By re-constructing a Christian theology, I mean engaging dialectically with the intellectual world which I have inherited and the existential world that I subsequently create for myself. The world that I have inherited is subjectively *interpreted*; the world I construct is subjectively *created*. The distinction is important in fashioning a Creed of Life to which, in my case, Tyrrell and Dewart both contributed and are acknowledged in this book.



*Dehellenization and Dr Dewart Revisited: A First-Person
Philosophical Reflection*

I have written this book as a serious first-person reflection on a philosophical topic. I have not laid out a systematic presentation of ideas, or presented an exposé of a body of thought, or presented a collection of philosophical ideas. Rather, the book is a brief account of my personal thinking on the topic of dehellenization as I recall it through Dewart himself and through the commentaries of other religious philosophers. I consider this book decisive in fashioning my Creed of Life. Among all the disciplines available to assist contemporary theologians in the fashioning a Creed of Life, a modern philosophy serves as a most fundamental one. Psychology, sociology, history, anthropology, etc., make a contribution towards this goal. However, it is only philosophy that is in a uniquely privileged position to undertake the task of a critical reflection on theology. This is so since the act of philosophizing upon human experience is universal in the sense that it constitutes conscious reflection, whereas other disciplines merely augment human reflection and mostly quantitatively at that.



A Future for Disbelief? Philosophy in a Dehellenized Age with Implications for Theology

A selection from the Foreword to this book by Patricia Shallow best sums up the usefulness of its content for the formation of a Creed of Life. “In this work, the author allows us into his scholarly and inquisitive mind as he retraces his philosophical and theological background, sharing with us, essentially, his conclusions with respect to his personal, spiritual journey. Having found himself in a world being propelled forward by social, cultural and religious change and being unsatisfied with the answers provided by his classical formation, he came to find a home in existential, phenomenological philosophy. Within the Western school of scholastic philosophical thought, he viewed the answers to his questions regarding his personal, contemporary experience as rooted in a static past, one with authoritarian answers assumed to be relevant for all time.

Influenced by the *ressourcement* partisans of Vatican II as well as by the ‘dehellenization’ of Western philosophy advocated by his teacher and mentor, Leslie Dewart, he came to the conclusion that existential phenomenological philosophy provided a method by which his spiritual life was both revitalized and evolutionary. Here he is able to continuously construct his present and future lifeworld in which are incorporated his relationship with God and with his

faith community.”



Alfred Adler and the Theological Virtues (M.Th. Thesis, 1989)

Today, something called “grass roots” theology is being undertaken in many quarters. By that I mean a type of theological thinking that arises out of one’s experience in life. There is a tendency in human experience for acts or actions of an individual to be based on the movement of thought from principle to application. And this principle is very often verified by reason. Whereas, in “grass roots” theology, one moves from experience to reflection, then follows a statement of principle. I have sensed such current critical thinking within a pastoral context and among those seeking to establish a Creed of Life. This has motivated me to undertake an investigation, from a pastoral perspective, into the relationship between the theological virtues and Alfred Adler’s psychological thinking. Dissatisfaction with philosophical thought as a basis for pastoral theology also prompted me to seek for something suitable within psychology in articulating my experience. In the introduction to *Faith, Hope and Charity: An Adlerian Perspective*, I have attempted an explanation how I understand this shift from philosophy to psychology as a tool in current theological thought. This shift takes place most evidently in the pastoral theology of Vatican II as opposed to the speculative interpretation of dogmatic theology.



Ecclesial Reflections: Three Contemporary Essays

These three essays may be considered as a point of departure for any Christian contemplating the possibility of a Creed of Life. These essays concern the Church and State from a contemporary Western perspective. They are not historical in literary presentation but philosophical in purpose. The first essay concerns the basis of Christian faith, i.e., the achievements of Vatican II in the areas of knowledge, faith and basic truths. The second concerns contemporary ecclesiology and the notion of *laïcité*; and the third essay is a personal reflection by the author on a posthuman philosophical identity. Currently this book is only available through Notion Press, India and amazon.com (India).



Philosophical Musings: Or, Philosophical Research into Western Thinking

These three critical essays develop the insights of *Ecclesial Reflections: Three Contemporary Essays* a little further. Chapter One consists of the author's personal musings of the generalities of Western philosophy. Chapter Two is an unconventional reflection of the Nicene Creed entitled, "Please, let me be an atheist." And Chapter Three is a philosophical critique of contemporary faith and belief.

SELECTED REVIEWS USEFUL IN ESTABLISHING A CREED OF LIFE

These books have had a varying impact on the formulation of my Creed of Life. I wrote these reviews in the early stages of re-thinking my inherited classical philosophical background. Their influence was indirect more than direct but the legacy of their influence on my thinking remains. The reviews are arranged alphabetically by author. The date refers to the date of publication, not the date of the review.

Basinger, David & Randall • Brooks, David • Buermeyer, Laurence • Buber, Martin • Caley, David • Chittister, Joan • Cornwell, John • Davis, Claire (Henderson) • De Satgé, John • Dewart, Leslie • Dwyer, Jean Marie • Fearnow, Mark • Ferencz, Nicholas • Gardner, Martin • Georgiou, S.T. • Gilreath, Shannon • Griffith, Brian • Herbert, David • Kaufmann, Walter/ Martin Buber • Kelly, Anthony Bernard • Kwant, Remy C. • Leonard, Ellen • Levi, Peter • McLaughlin, Anne Kathleen • Murray, Gilbert • Newell, Philip • Nolan, Albert • O'Murchu, Diamuid • Pungente, John • Rops, Daniel & Sprug, Joseph • Sabatier, August • Skrbina, David • Theron, Daniel J. • Thornton, Martin • Trudinger, Paul • Tyrrell, George • Wells, David • Williams, Shirley



BASINGER, David, & Randall Basinger – *Philosophy and Miracle: The Contemporary Debate* (1986).

This book is an assessment of the opinions of philosophers in the analytical tradition. After defining what is understood by “miracle” the authors go on to ask questions about the term from historical, scientific and epistemological perspectives. The chapters are brief and open with a series of questions which are cumulative and the whole process concludes with a chapter entitled, “Should Theists expect Miraculous Divine Intervention?” The authors answer that “it would appear then that our discussion of miracles has left classical theists with a dilemma” (p. 117).



BROOKS, David – *The Road to Character* (2015)

I was asked by a friend to read this book, and if I did not want to read the whole thing, just read the sections on vocation, sin and St Augustine, he suggested. He was interested in my assessment of Brooks’ understanding of these sections.

The review reflects my reaction, (not response), to this book. The sections he recommended reiterated what I had learned from previous studies. The fact is that Brooks’ treatment of the road to character did not deeply engage my attention. I found myself

frequently saying, “so what’s new here,” as I continued to read through the book. The casual identification of secular and religious notions gave me the impression that the author believes that one system of belief is just as good as another. This annoyed me. I felt that he was suggesting that the psychological fiction of the journalist and the metaphysical reality of the philosopher work equally effectively. To my mind, his rhetoric seemed more important than the content he was discussing. Given that there is such a thing as “secular theology” this book leans in that direction.

In the Introduction the author gives his reason for writing the book: “I wrote it, to be honest, to save my own soul” (p. xiii). Thus, those individuals seeking some spiritual satisfaction in a worldly context may find a degree of satisfaction in reading the book. The book is a great read for individuals who have been formed in contemporary Western culture and who cannot read critically; but, rather, read for a “feel good” experience, or some sort of popular escapism with minimal sense of depth. That is to say, I did not find much of enduring value in the book. Speculating on the book’s shelf life I wonder just how long the book will seem refreshing to readers. How soon will it become stale and flat as is the fate of most journalistic-style writing?

But, to answer my friend’s questions; on vocation I favour the understanding that a vocation involves a “subject to subject” relationship, not a “subject to object” relationship as Brooks appears

to accept. Creation calls us to nothing, the creator does. Humans simply react to creation through good or not so good stewardship. On sin, I agree with Brooks that the word has to be reclaimed in Western culture and modernized as humans engage in their moral struggles. On St Augustine, since there is such a large body of commentary on his works, I would recommend reading Augustine first, then, consult his commentators. Finally, as Brooks closes his writing he says, “The good news of this book is that it is okay to be flawed, since everyone is” (p. 268). But, in contrast to his perspective, I asked myself whether or not religion, or a religious perspective, is a necessary component on the road to character formation. It would seem not, according to Louise Anthony. She notes that the secular life can provide rewards as great and rich as those claimed by people living a religious life. Further, transcendent experiences are possible, she claims, without transcendent beings, via a loving and open refocusing of attention toward other people. [See her *Philosophers without Gods: Meditations on Atheism and the Secular Life*, (p. xi).]



BUERMEYER, Laurence – *The Aesthetic Experience* (1924)

Buermeyer writes in the Preface “that in the account given of the way in which human nature enters art, and of its transformation in the process, some light not altogether familiar is to be found.” Human nature upon entering into art begins by the disentanglement

of our aesthetic interest from the practical, moral, scientific and religious concerns of life. Generally, people lack training in this task of aesthetic interest which the author maintains. He approaches the task of the aesthetic interest systematically beginning with the raw material of experience, i.e., instinct, followed by the role of intelligence in choosing among instincts since human intelligence has the ability to present an aesthetic quality to life. He maintains that the general principles of aesthetics must be applied to each of the arts. Hence, art is creative, not “phantasy-building.” Art is discussed in reference to religion, where religion is understood as an exercise of human powers without reference to the constitution of the world or the origin and destiny of humanity. Art is not science, since a scientific law attempts to show a single principle or formula that operates under many diverse conditions. Art requires the cooperation of other motives than science alone supplies. After completing this “rigorous read” and considering the aesthetic factors that go into the making of an artist the reader may discover something not altogether unfamiliar in his or her own experience.



BUBER, Martin – *Between Man and Man* (2002 reprint)

This is a book on phenomenological anthropology which aims to replace the classical philosophy of Aristotle and Aquinas in attempting to answer the newly disclosed problematic of humanity. Post-Aristotle and Post-Aquinas Western humanity, living in

modernity, faces a crisis of life of feeling no longer “at home in the universe.” Phenomenological anthropology is a Continental philosophical approach to the question. This collection of essays reveals the development of Buber’s attitude and stance in investigating this question under various headings such as Dialogue, The Single One, and Education and Man. Classical idealism finds no place in Buber’s thinking. He considers phenomena as giving the data within which existential relationships are forged. Buber brought together these essays in connection with his book, *I and Thou*, and “with particular regards to needs of our time” (p. ix). It is through the relationship of man and man that the essence of humanity is grasped, and not ideally so, Buber maintains.



CALEY, David – *The Rivers North of the Future* (2005)

I was given this book to read by a postgraduate student-friend whom I had taught. He inscribed it, “an excellent volume, enjoy!” The book had remained on my bookshelf for three years before I got around to reading it. Interestingly, in the early 1970s during my undergraduate years at the University of Toronto I had been exposed to the religious and sociological views of Ivan Illich, (either through courses by Gregory Baum or Leslie Dewart, I actually forget which), and found his views to be of peripheral significance to my own. Today, however, I find that his perspective has high informative value and is worth considering from a critical philosophical point of

view.

Cayley obviously thinks so as well. Cayley wants to get at the bottom of Illich's view that the corruption of the best is the worst and examines Illich's religious writings to test this thesis. Religious institutions that regulate Revelation are an evil in Illich's view. That such regulation, when it impedes personal choice, is an evil that slowly grows in human consciousness. According to Illich we choose our relationships with others and any institution that impedes our ability to choose is corrupt to some degree.

Cayley gives us 44 pages of Illich's background by which he accounts for Illich's understanding of the deformation of faith. Illich became perplexed in his theological studies by the notion of Revelation as it was theologically understood in a fallen world which was governed through various processes of institutionalization. Also, Illich was not a supporter of Vatican II and he believed the priestly office should be kept separate from civil politics.

He addressed his concern via religious studies, rather than theology. In addressing his concern as a theologian, he would have acquired institutional authority, he maintained. He is an historian and reminds the reader frequently of this status in the book. Illich maintained that he was not a theologian, yet, in truth, he discussed historical records from a theological perspective, and not simply religious studies, as I understand the two disciplines. (I suspect that some who may have

read the book missed this point.)

This book is worth reading, but I caution the reader to distinguish between the faith of an individual Christian and institutionalized Christianity. It is the latter that Illich criticizes. Yet, there is much here, when properly understood, to encourage an individual's faith and fashioning a Creed of Life.



CHITTISTER, Joan – *The Monastery of the Heart: An Invitation to a Meaningful Life* (2011)

This is truly a postmodern piece of literature. Postmodern themes are seen not in its content, but in its construction, that is, the printed artistic form which reflects the author's style of thinking which is not classically expressed. The printed text, arranged in “sense lines” reminds me of the layout of the poetic passages in John's Gospel and the format of the Roman Lectionary which is designed to be read aloud. Chittister's intent is to answer the postmodern phenomenon of “too many choices” in life. Within classical Christendom, however, “too many choices” was not the case. At that time, there was only one choice by which salvation was to be achieved. The Kingdom of God was easily seen as co-extensive with the Church and all spirituality reflected that singular point of view. It is from within this point of view of salvation that the traditional monastery was founded.

But the distinction and subsequent separation of the sacred and secular has changed all that. The author's thoughts about contemporary monastic community, which reflects the experience of the individual in postmodern society, are contrary to the traditional understanding. Not Christendom, the traditional concept, but Christianity, the postmodern concept, is the basis of contemporary experience for reflection and the formation of the monastery of the heart. Not the objective monastery built of bricks and stone, but the subjective monastery of the heart of flesh is the locale of a meaningful life and spiritual growth, i.e., the opportunity for salvation. No ideology, Christian or otherwise, is presented in this book. Ideologies are classical expressions of public understanding. Rather, a template as a frame of personal reference, is suggested as a guide to the complexities of life as the "old ways" no longer serve satisfactorily the contemporary life. With no Christian ideology to interfere, Chittister's approach is able to appeal to both believer and non-believer alike. Those seeking personal meaning in life, not in an institution, but through a movement of the soul will appreciate her approach. Another postmodern characteristic reflected in the book is the identification of the monastery as "a new movement for a new world." In contrast to the classical Western monastery, a physical location which was designed to turn the heart towards God, the postmodern monastery is "of the heart" desiring to invite God in. In this way a community of seekers gathers itself with a common goal, which is a transcendental meeting with God in their daily lives, wherever they

are lived out. I suggest that humanistic psychology, popular not all that long ago and that characterized the human potential movement, is at the root of Chittister's efforts within Benedictine spirituality to establish the monastery of the heart.



CHITTISTER, Joan & Archbishop Rowan WILLIAMS –
Uncommon Gratitude: Alleluia for All That Is (2010)

The context of this book, more than the content of this book, determines the focus of this review. That such a spiritual self-help book, proffered by well-known ecclesial spokespersons has made an appearance in our day indicates the demise of the traditional community of the Christian faithful in the experience of many contemporary Westerners. The authors present a series of meditations on matters mostly outside the traditional understanding of the Church. They attend to their secular experience as revealing the presence of God in the “market place of spiritualities” (p. viii). To my mind their meditations are for the “unchurched” and, affirm all that is positive within human life even when experience suggests the contrary. While not a book for novices in the spiritual life, the meditations offered constitute sort of a “starting point” for the spiritually inclined, but not necessarily religious persons seeking a deeper understanding of hope than is currently felt in contemporary Western culture. Like all meditations the thoughts presented are not ends in themselves but, rather, provide the means to an end.

Admitting to a monastic mindset, the authors reflect on their experiences and recognize that such an approach and stance offers in this life the opportunity for genuine praise and gratitude, or a contemporary “alleluia for all that is” – the Church notwithstanding! From this perspective, this book reflects the current state of much of Western spirituality and is truly a sign of the times.



CORNWELL, John – *Breaking Faith* (2002)

This book reports on the contemporary state of the institutional church. It includes the author’s own confessional statements which help us to understand his perspective and criticisms of the Roman Church. It is a good assessment of the Church without the sensational overtones which I have so often found in books written by journalists examining the Roman Catholic faith. Cornwell introduces the notions and issues that surfaced at the time of the so-called Modernist Crisis. He does so wisely and reveals that his personal convictions are in sympathy with the thinking of these theologians. This gives the work philosophical credibility as opposed to mere opinion. The following passage, found on pages 215/16, is typical of the observations and insight Cornwell shares with the reader throughout the book. “Pluralist, multicultural societies are a fact, and Catholics have to live in such societies by according more than mere tolerance for the convictions of their fellow citizens. After all, Catholics expect the same respect of

others. Moreover, how can the world avoid destroying itself if its religionists cannot find a way of living together in harmony? ... But Christian theologians rightly object that theirs is a Trinitarian God, a God that essentially expresses the truth of creation and salvation, and which is profoundly distinct from that of the God of Israel, or of Islam, or the Gods of the Hindus, or Buddhism. All the same, brave attempts have been made by Catholic theologians to find a basis for genuine respect.” To my mind, in our time, a basis for such genuine respect may be found via an existential philosophy, in contrast to a classical philosophy, with roots in the thinking of the “modernist” theologians. I recommend this book to any serious general reader probing into the current status of the institutional church.



DAVIS, [Henderson] Claire – *After the Church: Divine Encounter in a Sexual Age* (2007)

In one’s “grappling with the meaning of life in a Western post-Christian world” [Rosemary Ruether], Claire’s short work is not to be mistaken for an average self-help book. It is an example of the contemporary practice of theologizing “outside the church,” as she admits. Though short, the book contains pithy, insightful comments arising out of personal experience. The book gives the impression that almost every word is weighed. The enduring value of this work, to my mind, is that Claire invites us to follow her parents’ decision

in our respective lives. “They stopped reading the story and stepped into the book” to find a new imaging of God. My initial reading was completed in one afternoon. However, the more enriching reading followed over the period of a few days. I had purchased the book on speculation that I might gain some insight into her father’s theological understanding since I am doing research for a book on the theological similarities and differences among Charles Davis, Leslie Dewart and Gregory Baum. I read this book as a philosopher, but not presupposing any particular school, i.e., Thomistic, Cartesian, Hegelian, etc. so as not to prejudice my appreciation of her perspective. Were I to discern a philosophy underpinning her thinking, I would identify it as holistic phenomenology. Whether one’s status in reading the book is as a philosopher, a theologian, a social critic, or a wounded soul, there are brief personal statements throughout the book that reveal a great deal about her fidelity to revelation in relating her growth through a variety of personal experiences. I draw the conclusion from reading the book that for some of us we may have to “leave the church” in order to “enter the Church” and leave the guilt behind.



De SATGE, John – *Peter and the Single Church* (1981)

The author, writing 15 years after Vatican II, classes himself as an Evangelical Anglican. He has written a balanced book evaluating the theological contribution of Vatican II to ecumenical discussions.

He seeks to identify an ecclesiology that could be acceptable to any main stream Christian denomination. In short, he suggests that a Petrine ministry properly understood could permit an Anglican presence within Roman unity.

He laments theology being put on the “back burner,” as it were, in favour of historical and sociological interests. However, he asks the question: “The institution [of the Papacy] is at once political and spiritual, but which is at its heart? Will its inmost secrets open to a theological key, or should we pick the lock with sociology?” (p. 44). In entering into discussions on disputed theological territory, he advises that we would do very well to “refocus and probably redefine the matter before considering afresh our attitude towards it” (p. 60). To my mind, 50 years after Vatican II, and with hindsight, I suggest that he has concluded his study on a note of optimism, yet to be realized. However, he did admit that his treatment of the topic is not the final say on the matter. In reading this book I recalled the positions of earlier theological thinkers such as, George Tyrrell, Marshall McLuhan and Ivan Illich, who addressed many of the same topics.



DEWART, Leslie – *Religion, Language, and Truth* (1970)

The gravest religious crisis of the Catholic Church has to do with the epistemological, metaphysical and other philosophical questions

that underlie theological and religious disputes. What are merely philosophical views have often been invested with the certitude of faith and the authority of revelation, according to Dewart. Our language, philosophical and otherwise, is creative of our human selfhood rather than illustrative of the world's objectivity, he maintains. As a result, humanity must participate more consciously and deliberately in its own self-fashioning than has been possible or necessary in the past. Within this process of self-fashioning, we may take advantage of the growth of human experience in order to improve upon our concept of God, and subsequently improve upon our understanding of religion, language and truth as foundational to a Creed of Life.



DEWART, Leslie – *The Foundations of Belief* (1969)

Will Christianity undertake to direct its own evolution or continue to evolve at an obsolete rate and in a pre-conscious mode? This is the question Dewart addresses in this work. Within the order of Christian belief, he investigates what has been changed by the phenomenological philosophical approach to belief and what has not yet been changed by it. He argues that the reshaping of the future is but the other side of the past. Hellenization shapes the future, whereas, dehellenization reshapes the future. It is only after we have learned to define ourselves in terms of human consciousness that we can appreciate the logic of the process by which we became

conscious of ourselves, he maintains. Specifying ourselves in terms of human consciousness is achieved through a process of dehellenization. The dehellenization of Christian belief does not mean the rejection of the Hellenist past. The term is not simply a negative one; it is not un-hellenization. In short, the task to which philosophy is called today is to set dehellenized foundations that transcend classical philosophy, varieties of which can still be recognized in our contemporary belief systems.



DEWART, Leslie – *Future of Belief: Theism in a World Come of Age* (1966)

As an undergraduate in 1969 I was warned that this book was a difficult read. That was true then and it is true today. Dewart does not engage in any “pop” presentation of ideas but rather leads the reader on a rigorously exciting examination of an evolution in the process of critical thinking. Dewart intends this book for those interested in “the problem of integrating Christian theistic belief with the everyday experience of contemporary man” (p. 7). He is concerned mainly with the problem of everyday experience as understood within the Roman Catholic perspective at the time of, and following, the Second Vatican Council. The context in which Dewart writes determines the issues and passions of the day. This is not a limitation in understanding his thought. Although, not intended as a book on pastoral theology I recommend that the last chapter be

read as such. “The Development of Christian Theism” has insights on the self-conscious development of the Christian understanding of God that should be of interest to any critically thinking pastor of our day and age. Our theological conception of God is challenged by secular thought which fails to appreciate the foundational Hellenist background to much contemporary doctrine and dogma. Dewart has presented, from this reviewer’s perspective, an excellent academic understanding of the problem. He is able to help one to think one’s way out of that Hellenist cultural setting and remain faithful to the truth it has expressed. Not to be overlooked are the copious footnotes in the text which indicate the seriousness and depth of Dewart’s thinking. They are of exceptional use in helping the contemporary individual in understanding the evolutionary characteristic of interpretive philosophical thought. Further, these notes provide a needed corrective to the misunderstood and misrepresented classical ideas of antiquity often encountered in popular religious books. I would not recommend the book for the average non-philosophical reader, nor the lazy reader. In fact, this is a painful book, not so much to read, but to put into practice should one attempt to fashion a Creed of Life. It calls the reader to a future self-confidence based on a self-conscious awareness of who humans are and what they have the potential to become. Understanding Vatican II as a Christian watershed, Dewart writes: “We now stand on a very uncertain terrain. We are justified in exploring it solely for the attempt’s possible heuristic value” (p. 173).



DEWART, Leslie – *Evolution and Consciousness: The Role of Speech in the Origin and Development of Human Nature* (1989)

In his insightful review, Gregory Nixon states: “*Evolution and Consciousness* was written before the consciousness studies boom of the 90s (which continues in this decade) but it was a mistake for it to languish so ignored. Much of the confusion of more recent writings on consciousness could have been avoided if the lessons of this book had been given a wider reading.” I agree. However, this book is more than an academic work on a contemporary understanding of consciousness. It probes into philosophical thought as far back as the Hellenists. Further, an appreciation of the profound thought in this book awaits anyone who is familiar with Leslie Dewart’s earlier writings. Throughout his earlier philosophical works Dr Dewart had embarked on an intellectual process of ‘dehellenization’ which I suggest culminates in *Evolution and Consciousness*. Dehellenization is a positive process. It is not Unhellenization, a negative process. For Leslie Dewart dehellenization is an evolutionary process within modern Western philosophy which meets satisfactorily the needs of the contemporary critical thinker. Given a good grasp of Dewart’s notion of dehellenization, then, the reader will discover in this book a clear and useful presentation of the fruit of Dewart’s philosophical thought for contemporary philosophy which will be useful in establishing a Creed of Life. From my perspective, however, serious

readers, (the casual reader will likely abandon the book), will most likely experience a rise in their philosophical anxiety level. This is a common experience as one moves from a scholastic to phenomenological philosophical interpretation. The deconstruction of one's inherited way of thinking, as Dewart labels his dehellenization, is a threatening activity. As an invitation to philosophical growth, Dewart's dehellenization is the conscious creation of the future of belief, (or Creed of Life), within an evolutionary context. Linguistic skills and notions evolve within the human capacity for self-reflection. The book, in short, is an examination of the evolutionary philosophical maturation within contemporary western experience.



DWYER, Jean Marie – *The Sacred Place of Prayer: The Human Person Created in God's Image* (2011)

This work lives up to its intent to be solid food for the soul. We are encouraged to pray, not to change God's mind, but rather prepare ourselves to receive the fullness of divine life in Christ, the author maintains. The desert tradition of praying is presented to us from within the Dominican tradition of community life. This tradition avails itself of the contributions to prayer that scripture makes. Such as being created in the likeness and image of God which is a major fact that we must recognize in our prayer life according to Dwyer. Further, to my pleasant surprise, Dwyer begins Part I of her book

with consideration of the philosopher Aristotle. It is enheartening to see philosophy return to its proper place in assisting us in our spiritual life. Aristotle guides us with the notion that everything exists with a purpose, a virtuous purpose in a divine-human relationship — and this from a pagan philosopher!

Beyond Aristotle, Dwyer moves to the treasures of the Old Testament. (However, I would have appreciated the term Hebrew Scriptures instead of Old Testament.) Now begins an inward journey according to her which ultimately leads to the outward journey that brings us to fulfillment in Christ. Christian mystical experience is addressed in chapter three through the person of Catherine of Siena. This chapter brings Part I of the book to an end with the general conclusion that human passions properly understood prepare the way for a transcendent prayer life to begin in us. Part II begins by revealing in us a process of “becoming” as the place of prayer. The Desert Fathers guide the reader here by their example of a disciplined life. Such discipline is a great asset for us even today. Then follows additional examples, traditional and modern, that point the way to finding our centre of prayer. This section also contains, at the end of each chapter, short practical suggestions to enhance growth in the spiritual life. Part III begins with a reflection on Mary and her place in the new creation. This chapter is, in fact, Christ-centred and culminates with an understanding of the human person created in God’s image. That is to say, from a Christ-centered perspective, we bring God into our daily routine in which to pray is

to live in a new way. Finally, the appendix is a little treasure in itself but I leave that discovery to the reader.



GARDNER, Martin – *The Whys of a Philosophical Scrivener* (1999)

Gardner does what he says. He accounts for the “whys” of his beliefs. As he does this, he presents to his readers what is familiar to their own thought and thereby evoking insight on their part. It ought to be understood, however, that he writes in broad strokes and ideas are expressed in a manner that, at times, lacks precision. By reflecting on a wide range of philosophers and artists he presents us with material we thought we understood. His efforts amount to an attempt at preserving the integrity of scholastic thinking, or a contemporary derivation of it, in the postmodern world. Gardner presents us with a North American understanding of a European approach to philosophical thinking. There is a lot of breadth to his work but, from my perspective, little depth. I finished the book with the sense that when all was said and done Gardener, as a ‘philosophical scrivener,’ was on the outside looking in. However, I do recommend the book for Gardner’s encyclopedic approach to his material which could aid in clarifying why one might want to fashion a Creed of Life. It is worth noting that Gardner views William James, the psychologist, as a particularly insightful thinker.



GEORGIU, S. T. – *The Isle of Monte Cristo* (2010)

This is the final book in a trilogy addressing the inner life. I am tempted to read the others. It must be borne in mind that the author is an Orthodox Christian and an educator who believes that much of life is about awakening to the interior experience and its metaphysical implications and outcomes. What he shares with his readers is certainly Christian, but he acknowledges that the interior life is common to all major religious traditions. The book is an account of one man's personal journey to discovering an inner treasure which he believes is hidden in all of us. The Western reader will likely find a refreshing approach in Orthodox spirituality and liturgy. There are deep lessons to be learned here by everyone especially in contrast to the more superficial new age movements that are trendy today. The reader inclined to a more academic approach to spirituality will be pleased with the copious notes the author provides. He is theologically erudite and his Christian convictions are clearly evident in his interpretation of the interior life. Western readers, being familiar with the notions of salvation and redemption as experienced through the sacraments, will find a rich alternative to the classical understanding, since Georgiou speaks of the "restorative Presence of Christ" and experiencing a "salvific zone." This book tells of a spiritual quest inspired by the secular novel, *The Count of Monte Cristo* by Dumas. Georgiou was

inspired by the change of heart of Count Edmund Dantes. Georgiou writes: “No longer does the inexorable avenger declare, ‘My will be done’ but ‘Thy will be done.’ Finally, a section entitled, “Wired to go where?” explores the relationship between spirituality and technology that is currently being undertaken. This is not a recent discovery, Marshall McLuhan in the 1960s was aware of this relationship. The author encourages us to manage technology in moderation and wisely so as not to be impeded from discovering a rich inner treasure. Good advice for anyone contemplating fashioning a Creed of Life.



GRIFFITH, Brian – *Correcting Jesus: 2000 Years of Changing the Story* (2009)

A prolific reader of history, Griffiths presents a perspective on the Jesus story that is pregnant with significant detail – much of which is probably under-appreciated by the average person, believer and non-believer alike. (A glance at the pages of notes, the bibliography and the index, shows the scope of the data upon which he bases this book.) He does not write to defend any religious perspective but critiques the expression of Christianity today in contrast to the understanding of the data given in the original revelation — or at least as close to that understanding as we can get. Authenticity in religious history is not a problem reserved to Christianity but it is common to all religions. To my mind, anyone interested in religious

studies, the ordained and non-ordained, and professional theologians would profit from reading the perspective offered by Griffiths. The courageous reader open to reforming his or her inherited understanding, will find motivation in Griffith's research. The title notwithstanding, Griffith's book is not negative, but is a critical and positive presentation of an orthodox understanding of contemporary Christianity. (Much of the content he presents was taught in the Catholic theological syllabus which I studied in my seminary days shortly after Vatican II.) I have no hesitation in recommending this book to those "new" to religious thinking and those well-acquainted with the Christian tradition, as well as those desiring to construct a mature Creed of Life.



HERBERT, David – *Religion and Civil Society: Rethinking Public Religion in the Contemporary World* (2003)

This is a challenging book from two perspectives. It challenges our presumptions about the place of religion in the public sphere. And, it is a challenge to absorb and interpret the amount of critical information Herbert presents. The division of the book into two parts, "Competing Theories" and "Case Studies" is most helpful. The Case Studies illustrate and expand upon the arguments presented in Competing Theories. The book is coherently written and its arguments clearly stated. I found myself pausing, on more than a few occasions, and reflecting on the implications of Herbert's

observations. That Herbert's perspective is "transcultural" strengthens his presentation. Further, to my mind, Herbert's rethinking calls for an "intellectual leap," on the reader's part because if one is persuaded by his presentation, one becomes committed to a new way of understanding relationships both public and private, individual and corporate. In short: "The picture has exceeded the frame." I would not consider this a definitive work but a serious exploratory work which sets parameters for future exploration. I read this book as a theologian and found its philosophy on the place of religion in public life amenable to the development of Christian revelation. This book will retain its academic value for religious researchers and theologians for years to come.



KWANT, Remy – *Critique: Its Nature and Function* (1967)

Critique asks, according to Kwant, "is the thing what it *should be*?" Further, this question can be asked only when "is" can differ from "should be." And humans are the only type of beings that can be criticised, given their responsibility for themselves and their world. Existential criticism, Kwant maintains, is the evaluation of facts in light of a norm, and these facts must be freely developed from experience and not exist because of necessity. Necessity cannot be critiqued. There is the critique of pre-scientific speech and that of scientific speech, Kwant believes. In the modern world it is through

speech as scientific reason, not speech as mythology, that humanity situates itself in the world through critique. Scientific solutions to problems notwithstanding, Kwant suggests that humans ultimately remain as mysteries to themselves. In order to improve, humanity needs to critique itself in its existential situation and re-create a world suitable for all human life. He notes that, “obsolete forms of life continue to exist because an historically determined form of life is identified with the eternal, the absolute” (p. 147). Critique will liberate humanity from its confining and obsolete past as it introduces a new philosophical analysis into the human situation. The usefulness of critique, as understood by Kwant, is essential to the formation of a Creed of Life to my way of thinking.



KWANT, Remy –*Phenomenology of Language* (1965)

The means *par excellence* by which to encounter others is language, according to Kwant, and a privileged way to understand this encounter is through philosophical reflection. Through a clear discussion Kwant introduces the topic to anyone interested in acquiring a deeper understanding of the function of language in the contemporary world. The footnotes contain little gems of insight which are developed in the main text. I cite some of them to give the prospective reader a sense of the book’s content: ● “Only when the individual surrenders his own mode of existence within the group may one speak of the group as a ‘mass.’ ... One who refers to the

others as a 'mass,' places himself outside the group, makes the group an object of his stare, and reduces his fellow-men to a single homogeneous object. ● Man is a manifold searching for meaning. If reason plans the whole of life by itself, certain aspects of man may fail to receive due regard. ● Language is the principle means through which man is humanized. ● The denial of God is sometimes provoked by the way in which others affirm God. Likewise, moral principles are sometimes denied because others misuse these principles to preserve a petrified system. ● Man is not a complex of fixed characteristics but rather a mode of having characteristics – namely, the mode of being in such a way that one always transcends what one is. ● According as we live in different circumstances and find ourselves in different fields, we assume a different attitude and speak a different language. ... Each perspective has its own significations, its own words, its own tone of voice. All of these together constitute a unity, just as our life is marked by unity. But the unity of our life is certainly not the unity of a rational synthesis. ● Past ages regarded the difference between Christian denominations too much in terms of homogeneous truth and falsity. Our era begins to realize that the fundamental message of Christ can be regarded in different perspectives which do not always necessarily exclude one another. ● The renewal of the liturgy must be on guard against exaggerated rationalization. The celebration of the liturgy wants to place us in the presence of the mystery *par excellence*, and this intention can certainly not be realized in a rigidly rational fashion. ● By speaking we change the empirical

being into an ideal being and consequently into a general being. ● There is a form of security which is being lost and has to be lost. Many people are sacred by the dimensions which unfold themselves for their existence. This anxiety, however, is one of the phenomena accompanying the birth of a new kind of man. ● The achievements of the West...do not have to be taken over in the way they exist in the West, but may be adapted to the character of the other peoples.” Non-inclusive language notwithstanding, a convention of Kwant’s time, his book is well worth the effort to follow his presentation of the phenomenology of language as a means of critiquing one’s proposed Creed of Life.



LEONARD, Ellen – *George Tyrrell and the Catholic Tradition* (1982)

This book came to my attention relatively late after I had begun my research and writing into the theology and life of George Tyrrell to which I was introduced in my theological studies at St Michael’s College, University of Toronto. Leonard’s book is an excellent introduction to the so-called Modernist Movement within the Catholic Church. As well, to my mind, she has captured Tyrrell’s personality which deeply affected his theological thinking. Even though Modernism as a theological phenomenon is waning in academic circles, much of our contemporary theological insight has its roots in the thinking of many Modernists, Catholic and

Protestant, as is acknowledged by Leonard. Her style of writing is pleasant to read, with no glossing over or misinterpreting of significant and pertinent sociological, historical and theological details. To individuals interested in the development and study of theology, to divinity students, undergraduates and graduates, and to those who might only be interested in significant personalities of an earlier period in church history, as well as those contemplating an alternative Creed of Life, I recommend this book.



LEVI, Peter –*The Frontiers of Paradise: A Study of Monks and Monasteries* (1987)

Even though the publisher has classified Levi's book in the category of religion/history, Levi does not present his study in a scholastic or formal academic manner. Rather, he is a poet interpreting history. This must be understood by the reader to truly appreciate the value and attraction of Levi's study. "What I have chosen to do is to discuss the most important historical turning-points in some detail, but to show as much as possible by examples, which have been picked for the light they shed on this or that," he writes. He concentrates on the monks and monasteries of the West more than the East because Western records are fuller and more reliable than Eastern ones. Regardless of the culture, theology, or the historical context, all desires to found monasteries, the author maintains, is personal in that it is the desire for God and the need for silence and

for study and meditation that is at the root of this desire. In voluntary isolation from the world a constant process of self-reform for the monk and of the monastery is undertaken. Neither is permitted stasis, but both must move either forwards or backwards, Levi contends. He concludes that in this study of monks no one conclusion, but many conclusions are possible on the reader's part. The book's significance in fashioning a Creed of Life is obvious, I would think.



McLAUGHLIN, Anne Kathleen – *A Place Called Morning* (2001)

Anne's is a sacred story for our ordinary lives. She invites us to encounter the "truth of the story" for ourselves. "And perhaps you, if you are adept at reading between the lines, at sorting out what really happened, from what might have happened, from what I wish had happened", are words that truly reflect her character as I remember it. Having worked with Anne I can say, with some degree of certainty, that Anne is truly in the book. But whether it is the contemporary Anne or the Anne of a different time, I am not sure. This requires further discernment. If sacrament is opportunity spoken through ordinary events that bring us to a vivid awareness of God's presence, then this book is sacramental. There is no feigned ceremony, ritual or "other-worldly" mystery here but ordinary things and relationships that bear sacramental grace. However, this is not a religious novel. There are no miraculous events here, no

sudden conversions, nor “coming to the faith.” Rather, there is just the reality of an invitation to live one’s ordinary life in God’s truth. Anne weaves a good tale of mystery amid mundane experience. There are surprises and revelations in this story which, upon reflection, will not be that different from the readers own experience. Rich in description, Anne gives us insight into the spiritual life of her characters without becoming intrusive or voyeuristic. In short, her story is a discovery of the sacred within the ordinary at a place called “Morning.” In short, I understand this book as an example of Anne’s personal Creed of Life.



MURRAY, Gilbert – *Stoic, Christian and Humanist* (1950)

Murray makes this philosophical inquiry a pleasant and insightful experience for the reader. His clear expression and precise use of language accounts for this. He does not take up countless pages with explanation but manages to identify clearly, from the beginning of his investigation, the points at issue. This book arises out of “special reading and study” and the “by-products of a long life in which I have had almost constantly in the back of my mind, as a half-conscious preoccupation” (p. 7). This little book is an excellent resource for the average serious and somewhat philosophical thinker who desires something more than sketchy platitudes in developing a deeper understanding of the relationship among Stoic, Christian and Humanist ways of thinking. I found the book challenged the

suppositions and presuppositions of my own convictions without being negatively critical in its approach. The book discusses issues of importance to humanity, Murray tells us, and he conducts his investigation of these issues with fresh philosophical insight. This is one philosophical book that clarifies more than confuses.



NEWELL, Philip – *Praying with the Earth: A Prayerbook for Peace* (2011)

This non-denominational book presents a weekly programme of spiritual thinking for busy people. It is intended to afford the reader an opportunity to undertake a quest in search of the human soul as much as contemporary life allows with its distractions. The author claims that the spiritual life sought through these meditations transcends the limiting factors often found in Jewish, Christian and Muslim traditions. The format of this little book facilitates this process and its pages are illuminated with artwork that emphasizes the spiritual themes that emerge from these distinct spiritual traditions. To my mind the book presents an opportunity for the seeker of spirituality (and a Creed of Life) in a secular age to engage in an activity of spiritual development that ultimately will spill over into the world. In the author's concluding remarks, he says: "If as nations and religious traditions we were to follow the wisdom of artists, if we were to remember what they seem never to forget, then we would know the themes that underlie the human soul are deeper

than the patterns that distinguish us.”



NOLAN, Albert – *Jesus Before Christianity* (2001)

There are many reviews posted for this book. As far as I can see, at the moment, none acknowledges the significant philosophical change in perspective that Nolan has adopted in this book. He does not write from the classical philosophical perspective of the Western philosopher or theologian. Any philosopher of phenomenology will appreciate what Nolan says in Chapter 19 about the spirit that motivated Jesus of Nazareth and that motivates us today. Chapters 1 through 18 will be of special interest to the theologian. They are especially significant when understood from a phenomenological perspective. I dare suggest that a phenomenological understanding of Nolan’s work will correct the long-standing habit of Christians noted by Nolan. “Jesus has been more frequently honoured and worshipped for what he did not mean than for what he did mean” (p. 3). In short, phenomenological philosophy discloses the baggage of scholastic philosophy that has contributed to this undesirable habit. To my mind, any Thomistic, neo-classical, or Hellenist philosopher who chooses to become familiar with the phenomenological perspective and then read the book will encounter additional personal insights about the Christian spirit and the formulation of a Creed of Life.



O'MURCHU, Diarmuid – *Religion in Exile: A Spiritual Homecoming* (2000)

O'Murchu states that he seeks to befriend religious questions rather than seek answers to them and, in fact, he does just that. Not much by way of an answer is provided. He offers a critique of the underlying assumptions to religious and spiritual issues which he has identified as problematic for the individual seeking a spiritual home, or an understanding of a world in which to be "at home." His is a phenomenological approach that presents current religious and spiritual issues in the popular vocabulary of religious critique. I can identify with his critique. However, I doubt I can agree with all of his interpretations. Agreement among academics is a perpetual problem. For theologians who read about religious issues treated by competent individuals in other disciplines, agreement seems particularly problematic. Although theologically trained, O'Murchu thinks about religious issues from a perspective more properly psychological than theological. This is not necessarily an undesirable approach but a theologian needs to be cautious and not accept psychological thinking as theological thinking. As I understand him, O'Murchu speaks more of the *psyche* than of the *pneuma*. The psychological perspective of the book makes this a good "self-help" resource for those troubled or curious minds who desire more than a shallow presentation or description of spiritual or religious issues. O'Murchu says: "The need to talk things out is the

pastoral context where possibilities begin to unfold” (p. 198). Issues are “talked out” in the book. But as I read it, I found myself asking: “So what?” and “Yes, but how is change to happen?” Thus, while I have no reservation about his description about returning home, I am disappointed to find no suggested direction on “how to return home.” I suggest that theologians could benefit from reading this psychological work, as well as anyone thinking about or reviewing his or her Creed of Life.



PUNGENTE, John & Monty WILLIAMS – *Finding God in the Dark II* (2011)

Traditionalists, conservatives and classicists beware. This is not a book for you. The spiritual exercises of St Ignatius, as present here, are not intended to reinforce or confirm anything about our knowledge of God. Nor are they intended to reinforce or confirm our inherited habits of belief or knowledge of ourselves as seekers of God’s presence in our lives. Rather, this book is intended for the person in contemporary Western society suffering from an inadequate and no longer satisfactory understanding of how God is to be understood in the present time. Emphasis is placed on our subjective understanding of God’s gifts to us. What changes is not God, but our understanding of God’s presence in our lives. In keeping with the spiritual literature of our time this book is a postmodern spiritual manual that requires time and effort on the part

the seeker desiring to deepen the spiritual life. The authors move away from the traditional retreat house as a locus deepening one's spiritual life. Two reasons are given for their decision. One, the retreat house no longer attracts individuals seeking spiritual development and, two the operation of the retreat house is economically unfeasible. The location of our spiritual development today is a secondary consideration according to the authors. Where we learn a new language for our understanding of God does not need to be reserved to a retreat house but, can happen wherever our lives happen to be lived. All one must do is reserve the time needed and explore the fictions representing our lives which we have created through the movies. The authors adopt an anthropological and philosophical approach that recognizes that the human animal must act through fictions if it is to be human. No other animal acts this way.

Also, the means by which we learn this new language can occur through the new vehicle of the media — something not available to St Ignatius. However, because this is a new vehicle and a somewhat untested approach to spiritual understanding there may be dangers not envisioned at this point. Watching contemporary movies, as an act of contemplative prayer runs the danger of the rhetoric becoming more important than the reason for the quest of spiritual enlightenment. Our non-classical world is constructed around four focal points according to the authors. Security, meaning, liberty, and belonging characterize the construction of our personal worlds in

contrast to the universal world of humanity. Our personal worlds, when understood in light of contemporary philosophy, reveal a change in the relationship between God, as creator, and the person as creature. We become co-creators with God in the construction of our personal worlds. In other words, in this view, the whole acceptance of ideology as a philosophical basis is called into question, and further, is abandoned if need be. Our imagination constructs and subsequently presents to us our personal worlds. In the authors' words: "In this personal and sacred space of encounter, the energies of our lives are integrated with the divine energies of God. It is not that we are doing all the creating, or that God is doing all the creating. The creation of the world we contemplate is done by God and us working together" (p. 16).

The 'manual' form of this book follows a very rigorous, pre-ordered structure, very much in keeping with the Ignatian-inspired origins of the Jesuit order. The book itself is divided up into four parts; each called a 'week,' which can be dealt with in a calendar week, perhaps less, or more. Each 'week' has a spiritually-inspired title and theme, with the requisite 'exercises' in the form of questions which the reader is encouraged to answer before beginning to watch the movies of that 'week.' The choice of box-office fare which the authors have chosen for the reader's spiritual analysis is quite impressive from the point of view of its sampling of the last decade or so of Hollywood's post-modern production of popular art work. It starts with the sci-fi thriller *Inception* with Leonardo DiCaprio,

and runs the gamut of everything from *Magnolia* with Tom Cruise, to the *Social Network*, *The Hurt Locker*, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, *Brokeback Mountain*, *Toy Story 3*, *Slumdog Millionaire*, *American Beauty*, with Kevin Spacey, *The Green Mile* with Tom Hanks, *Billy Elliot*, Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, and lastly, the animated film *Up*.

There are just over fifty films in all to view for the whole four 'week' program of the Spiritual Exercises. Anybody who takes this lightly or who thinks that this is just pop cultural fluff is seriously mistaken. The questions which are posed after each movie are intended to give strong pause for reflection for those who are the least bit spiritually engaged on their life journey. As well, they may very well be of significant use to those less familiar with the more mainstream or conventional forms of the Roman Catholic tradition.

In light of the above remarks a more appropriate title for the book might have been, *Finding Our Way out of Classical Darkness*. The authors write in the Conclusion: "Through the Exercises of St Ignatius, you have gone on a journey where you have allowed yourself to be found by God" (p. 317). The fact is, God has found you in your personally constructed, that is, subjective world view as opposed to finding you in a common human objective world view. The seeker in the spiritual life must now transcend his or her personal world by bringing the love of God into the universal world of humanity, for fear the personal world becomes a private world.



ROPS, Daniel & SPRUG, Joseph – *Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Catholicism* (1959-1964)

Many of the articles in this encyclopedia are the result of the change in direction in Catholic theological thinking that occurred as a result of Vatican Council II (1962-1965). For the most part these volumes reflect a transition period in the minds of their authors and in the daily experience of the Church. The value in consulting this series today is that we may be able to discern, through comparison with our present situation, where the theologians have succeeded and where they have failed, in advancing theological understanding. Each of the contributors has had a career which was lived out in the Catholic Church as it moved from a “pre-conciliar” to a “conciliar” theology. As with any interim literature some contributions were written on the eve of the Council and some after, thus they do not all necessarily reflect the direction in which the Council was headed. The *Encyclopedia* is an English translation of articles that were written in the authors’ first language, that is, either French, Italian or German. For the theologian, scholar, historian, sociologist, or philosopher, the series is an excellent point of departure to investigate the inauguration of the theological mind of Vatican II. (Or, for anyone contemplating a Creed of Life for that matter.) To promote interest in the topics of the encyclopedia, I have written a handbook, (*Vatican II: Theology in a Secular World – Exploratory Essays in Catholicity 1956-1967*), based on the *Encyclopedia* which

discusses at least one important theological perspective from each volume.



SABATIER, Auguste – *The Vitality of Christian Dogmas and Their Power of Evolution* (1898)

This short book consists of a lecture Sabatier gave in London in 1897. The subject is “the faith,” not “religion.” The lecture is not presented with any polemical intent or controversy in mind. Rather it is a truly theological work laying down a theme to which Sabatier will return in other works. Sabatier was an evangelical Protestant whose purpose in writing this book was to present church dogmas as evolving within human experience. Since human experience precedes the formulation of any dogma and since dogma follows upon experience one may conclude that dogma evolves and changes as human experience changes. The classical conventional wisdom of Christian theology was that dogma is expressed in fixed philosophical formulas. In his day, the emerging modern scientific methodology challenged that inheritance, forcing the theologian to ask: must we choose between pious ignorance and bare knowledge?

I regret not having been aware of Sabatier and his influence on George Tyrrell (1861-1909) when I wrote my book on Tyrrell, *The “Avant-garde” Theology of George Tyrrell: Its Philosophical Roots Changed My Theological Thinking*. In that book I contend that,

theological problems are, at root, philosophical problems and a contemporary philosophy, appropriate to a scientific and digital culture, is required to support contemporary theology. Ellen Leonard in, *George Tyrrell and the Catholic Tradition*, suggests Sabatier had an influence on Tyrrell's theological thought. I agree. To my mind, then, Sabatier's work has much to commend itself to contemporary Catholic theological thought without getting caught up in the politics of religion.



SABATIER, Auguste – *Religions of Authority and the Religion of the Spirit* (1899)

Sabatier examines the methods of explanation for a theology of authority and a theology of experience. In this book, unlike his *Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion*, he does cite other authorities in making his case. The notes in the Appendix amount to an annotated bibliography that serves the theologian very well. To my mind, this book is best read after one has become familiar with his other two books in which he addresses the same intellectual problem. He writes: “The question that occupies us, let us again repeat, is neither concrete religion nor established science, but the intellectual effort which creates science and the profound sentiment which gives birth to religion, independently of their more or less striking manifestations in everyday life” (p. 343).

Sabatier maintains that Christian consciousness is discovered through a history of the religious evolution of humanity. Whereas, Christian doctrine is best understood through three stages of experience, one developing from the other. Ultimately, progress through these stages leads to an eternal union of the soul with God. To reconcile these two methodologies that explain consciousness and doctrine is the existential task of the pious Christian. The study and explanation of the Christian experience may be understood through an historical and psychological system of education which consists of three parts. First, the religion of nature, or the elementary consciousness of God, and the metaphysical opposition between God and man. Second, the religion of law, or the moral cognizance of God, and the moral opposition between God and man. Third, the religion of love, or the Christian cognizance of God, affording salvation by redeeming love. For my part, this book is a theological approach that every serious Christian theologian ought to consider.



SABATIER, Auguste – *Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion Based on Psychology and History* (1897)

This book is about religious philosophy, as the title indicates, but it is not reserved to the Christian religion. It arises out of the author's concern for young people and how they will need to struggle with the relationship between religion and the new discipline of science. He writes, "Our young people, it seems to me, are pushing bravely

forward, marching between two high walls: on the one side modern science with its rigorous methods which is no longer possible to ignore or to avoid; on the other, the dogmas and customs of the religious institutions in which they were reared, and to which they would, but cannot, sincerely return” (p. xiv).

He sets out to answer the question what is the essence, or principle, of Christianity and he rejects all denominational polemics claiming “all we need is a little history and psychology” (p. 137). Sabatier’s engaging approach to philosophy became evident to me when he described religion as the beginning of the childish form of science, which ultimately will give way to higher and more rigorous forms. Within these two perspectives of history and psychology, the attitude of Jesus, which we must adopt, plays a very important part in Sabatier’s theology. Jesus’ actions placed him at the centre of human consciousness to delve down to the source of life accessible to everyone.

The volume that I read was published by George H. Doran Limited and is composed of three books: Book 1 on *Religion*, Book 2 on *Christianity* and Book 3 on *Dogma*. Part of Book 3 appeared as an independent lecture entitled, *The Vitality of Christian Dogmas and Their Power of Evolution: A Study in Religious Philosophy* (1898) which I also reviewed. While reading Sabatier I had a sense of an authentic engagement with the mind of the author. He was not simply rehearsing ideas reflective of discussions on the philosophy

of religion. Thus, I was not surprised to read in the Appendix, “In this book I have hardly noted any but facts that have been verified in myself and by myself. ... Those who are able and wishful to re-read my book in themselves, and thus verify my analysis, may perhaps draw some benefit from it” (p. 348). To my mind, the title of the book notwithstanding, Sabatier does not merely write about theology, he theologizes. A process anyone entertaining a Creed of Life would do well to undertake.



SKRBINA, David – *Panpsychism in the West* (2005)

Skrbina writes a book about theories, not a theory, he claims (p. 2). He restricts his discussion to the notion of “mind” as it has been understood from various perspectives in living and non-living things in this philosophical history. Panpsychism, as a philosophical theory, links beings and mind in a way no other system does, he maintains. However, due to the data and context in which he philosophizes he is confined to discussing his position from within a Hellenized philosophical perspective. His work is a western philosophical treatise and this is reflected in the title, *in the West*. Perhaps, at a later date, a book might appear entitled, *Panpsychism in Philosophy*. With that as a possibility, I view, Skrbina’s work as a preamble to a discussion on “mind” within a de-Hellenized, that is, Western conception of epistemology uninfluenced by Greek notions. I view Skrbina’s perspective on Panpsychism, as part of an

evolutionary process leading to a possible de-Hellenized understanding of mind. Whether or not such de-Hellenization is his intent is conjecture on my part. However, he hopes to introduce us to a broader concept of mind that may arise from considering “the evolution of panpsychist thought from the time of the pre-Socratics through the present” (p. 22). He does this successfully within the Hellenist heritage. As a sub-stratum to theology, my own discipline, Skrbina’s critical philosophical history provides theologians with the incentive to re-visit the philosophical supports of western theology although this is not his intent (p. 2). Even though *Panpsychism in the West*, as a theory about theories, does not attempt a philosophical de-Hellenization it does offer to theologians a sub-stratum from which to re-conceive the person as sharing in mind-like qualities with the rest of its environment. This perspective may appeal to anyone contemplating a Creed of Life.



Theron, Daniel J. – *The Apostle Paul: His Gospel Before the Gospels* (2006)

True to his evangelical roots, Theron tries to avoid creedal and dogmatic controversies in his interpretation of St Paul. Given the many translations of St Paul’s writings available to the scholar, he writes, “I have made my own translations, trying to steer clear of creedal and dogmatic interpretations” (p. x). He aims to test the traditional views about the Pauline corpus that have become

fossilized, stale and taken for granted. The author discusses Paul's Christomysticism. Such mysticism is often dormant in any religious person, the author maintains. "Its [Christomysticism's] seed was most likely sown in the likelihood that he had witnessed the crucifixion in person. It had been germinating in him and took charge of him in the fundamental transformation of his Damascus road experience" (p. 281). In his study of St. Paul, gospel, apostleship, mystery and truth are concepts that Theron revisits and presents to contemporary secular society for its re-creation and restoration. As a Catholic, I found this a refreshing read on a subject that has been thoroughly researched by a committed Christian.



THORNTON, Martin – *My God: Reappraisal of Normal Religious Experience* (1974)

This is a truly "personal" book. Thornton tells us: "I have collaborated with nobody and discussed it with nobody. Nobody has even read the proofs and offered valuable suggestions" (p. 9). In this, his eleventh book, he shares the personal fruits of an ordered religious life. This is not a book on apologetics, doctrine or dogma. It is "faith speaking to faith." To my mind, the greatest contribution in the book is Thornton's suggestion on how to overcome the fear that the Church seems to have about ordinary religious experience. This book with its roots deep in personal, not private, religious experience is a valuable aid in understanding contemporary

religious life. Professional theologians will gain insight from Thornton's existential distinctions in understanding the presence of God and pastors will appreciate his practical introduction to a "panentheistic" pastoral theology which moves away from a speculative theology. Readers of Thornton's earlier works will recognize how these experiences have influenced the understanding of his experiences shared with the reader in this work. A useful comparison for those contemplating a Creed of Life.



THORNTON, Martin – *Christian Proficiency* (1988)

Like his *English Spirituality*, this book, *Christian Proficiency* is written for the English context but is capable of speaking to Christians everywhere. Thornton reverses the perspective of his writing in this book compared to his approach in *Pastoral Theology: A Reorientation* (1958). *Christian Proficiency* is addressed to the faithful laity, not to clergy and theological students. Thornton warns of a lay tendency to over-rate devotion in the Christian life which has taken on the character of a particular age and culture. What is needed currently is a pastoral theology not a devotional theology. In typical English fashion, he writes: "My assumption is that the faithful, the serious but perfectly 'ordinary' Christian to whom I write, does not want to be particularly 'pious' or 'devout' or even vaguely 'good:' he wants to be efficient." This is truly a pastoral (practical) book for developing the spirituality of a Christian life. It

is a prayer book, not a book on praying. Engaging and digesting the content of this book illustrates how secular and pseudo-prayerful our present Christian thinking has become. The book contains a valuable theological glossary which lists 200 entries succinctly and clearly.



THORNTON, Martin – *English Spirituality: An Outline of Ascetical Theology According to the English Pastoral Tradition* (1986)

This book is written out of the English experience and for that reason should be read by American theologians and clergy. Thornton lives up to his promise and presents a practical pastoral approach to matters spiritual without an inordinate emphasis on the influence of psychology as is often present in American publications about spirituality and pastoral practice. Martin is honest and says that his book “contains nothing very new, but I think it contains a good deal that is old enough to have been forgotten” (p. xiii). His claim arises after years of personal experience. This is important because he notes that the science-religion relationship, that developed in favour of the dominance of science, seems to be reversing. He writes that “theology looks like becoming the only frame of reference into which current questions can be fitted” (p. 7). He fits spiritual questions into a framework of an English School of spirituality within the diversity of Catholic Christianity. To address the spiritual needs of the twentieth century he pays attention to the biblical roots

and early theological interpreters, especially the English, of the Christian experience. It is a great help to the reader that Thornton explains how and why his interpretations depart from other authors who have written in this field. Written, not as an academic text, but as a resource for the contemporary spiritual director, the book fulfils its purpose admirably. Finally, this is the same author who, in *Prayer: A New Encounter* (1972), criticized and altered his original perspective from an academic theologian to embrace a pastoral-theological stance. His reasons for this are well worth knowing for anyone undertaking the fashioning of a Creed of Life.



TRUDINGER, Paul – *Leaves from the Note Book of an Unashamed Heretic* (1988)

To my mind Trudinger could have entitled this collection of essays, *Dehellenized Leaves from the Notebook of an Unashamed Heretic*. This small book begins with the author introducing himself and giving his reasons for writing it. In examining the Nicene Creed, he arrives at conclusions that are very far removed from his youth. He recalls, “I was brought up in a very conservative Christian tradition. My parents were what are sometimes labelled ‘fundamentalists.’ They were good warm-hearted, compassionate folk. I found a great deal of vitality, of living faith in that tradition. ... I am grateful for that experience; grateful to my parents, teachers and pastors who guided me in my youth” (p. 1). The book is a personal testimony to

others who may have, or had, similar doubts and/or convictions. His conclusions are often so unconventional and not in accord with tradition, (i.e., the expression of the faith in Hellenistic philosophical categories), that he reminds his readers that he is a member of the Church, a Quaker, writing from within a community of faith. After his commentary on the articles of the Nicene Creed he offers some observations about the social and ethical life of persons of faith. A lecture given at McMaster University in 1986 is appended to the book. In a statement, typical of his approach to theological matters, Trudinger says, "If I were pressed to say in one short statement how I would describe the shift in my thinking and convictions, I would say it was a movement away from a strong 'Christocentric' focus to the conviction that 'God' must always be at the centre" (p. 60). This is a challenging little book and I recommend it to anyone who seeks to deepen the understanding of his or her faith in the light of contemporary experience. Whether or not a new Creed of Life is contemplated.

Allan M. Savage is an independent academic researcher in philosophy, theology and the humanities. He holds credentials from the University of Toronto, (B.A.); St Paul University, Ottawa, (S.T.B.); Heythrop College (Postgraduate Diploma in Pastoral Theology); University of South Africa (D.Th.) and European-American University (D.Litt.). He serves on the Editorial Team of the *Journal of Research in Philosophy and History*.